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THE AMERICAN LESSON  
OF  
THE FREE TRADE STRUGGLE  
IN ENGLAND.

BY  
GENERAL M. M. TRUMBULL.

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CHICAGO:  
SCHUMM AND SIMPSON,  
RADICAL REVIEW OFFICE.  
1884.



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BY M. M. TRUMBULL.



DEDICATION.

TO THE  
RIGHT HON. JOHN BRIGHT, M.P.,  
THE ELOQUENT FRIEND AND  
DEFENDER OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC,  
THE ENLIGHTENED ADVOCATE OF  
PEACE AND FREE TRADE  
AMONG NATIONS  
THIS WORK IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY  
HIS FRIEND AND DISCIPLE.  
M. M. TRUMBULL.



## LETTER FROM JOHN BRIGHT.

132 PICCADILLY, LONDON,

*August 8, 1882.*

DEAR SIR: I ought to have thanked you sooner for sending me your useful and very interesting "History of the Free Trade Struggle in England." I hope it may be widely read, and be of much use. But I do not expect your people will copy from us—they will learn from what is passing around them how much they suffer from your present barbarous tariff.

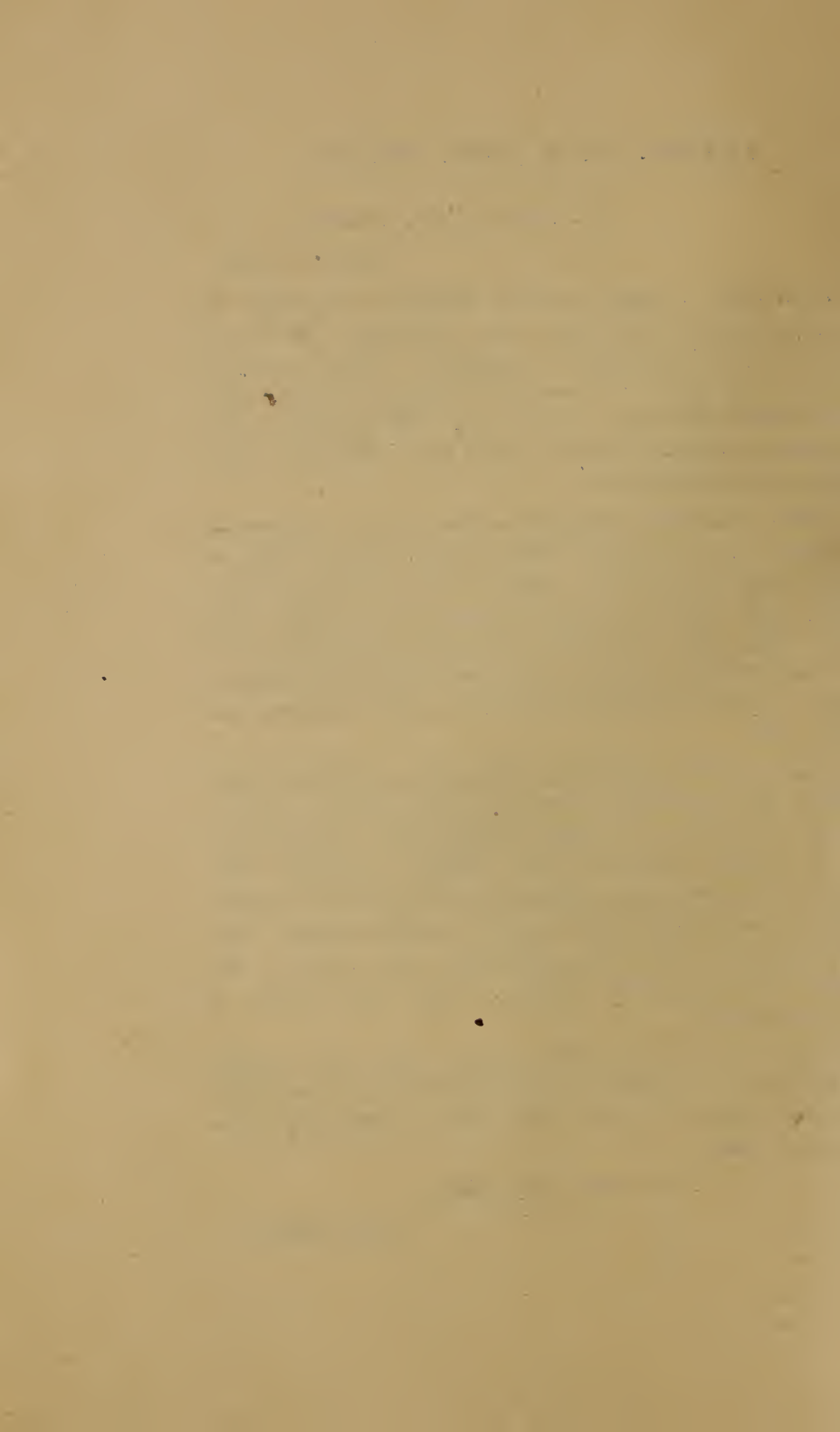
There are persons amongst us who are not anxious for a reform of your tariff. They say you cannot have an export trade, and cannot compete with us in foreign markets; that we have complete control of markets where is no high tariff; and where duties are considerable, that we can surmount them where you cannot, and that we have a great advantage over you in every market but your own.

Again, in your mercantile marine your condition is miserable and humiliating owing to your protective system, which has driven your ships off the ocean. Surely, there is intelligence enough in your country to perceive this, and it can only require discussion to bring about a change, which would bless every honest industry amongst you. The shackles have been struck from the limbs of the slave, and they cannot remain to fetter the freedom of your industries.

I hope your movement will advance—the world expects it from you. England and America, with free institutions and Free Trade, will lead the world to something better than the past.

I am very truly yours,

JOHN BRIGHT.



## PREFACE.

IN the Spring of 1882 I published a short History of the Free Trade Struggle in England. That little work became popular beyond my expectation, and the edition was soon exhausted. The press comments upon it were very favorable, and a second edition was called for. In preparing another edition of it I determined to revise the work altogether, to make it more copious and more interesting, and especially to show that the moral of the contest is as applicable to the United States to-day as it was to England forty years ago. This must necessarily be so, for the law of liberty cannot vary with climate or geography. One of our most popular statesman, a candidate for the second office in the republic, intimates in his letter of acceptance a different opinion. He says, "the fact that our form of Government is entirely unique among the nations of the world, makes it utterly absurd to institute comparisons between our own economic systems and those of other governments." This is a very serious error. No government is "unique" enough to violate the laws of moral science with impunity. No government ever will be so "unique" that it can justly tax one man for the benefit of another, or forbid its citizens to buy their goods in the cheapest market.

The arguments used by the advocates of the American Protective system in 1884 are all borrowed from the speeches delivered in the British Parliament in 1844 by the advocates of the English Protective system. This

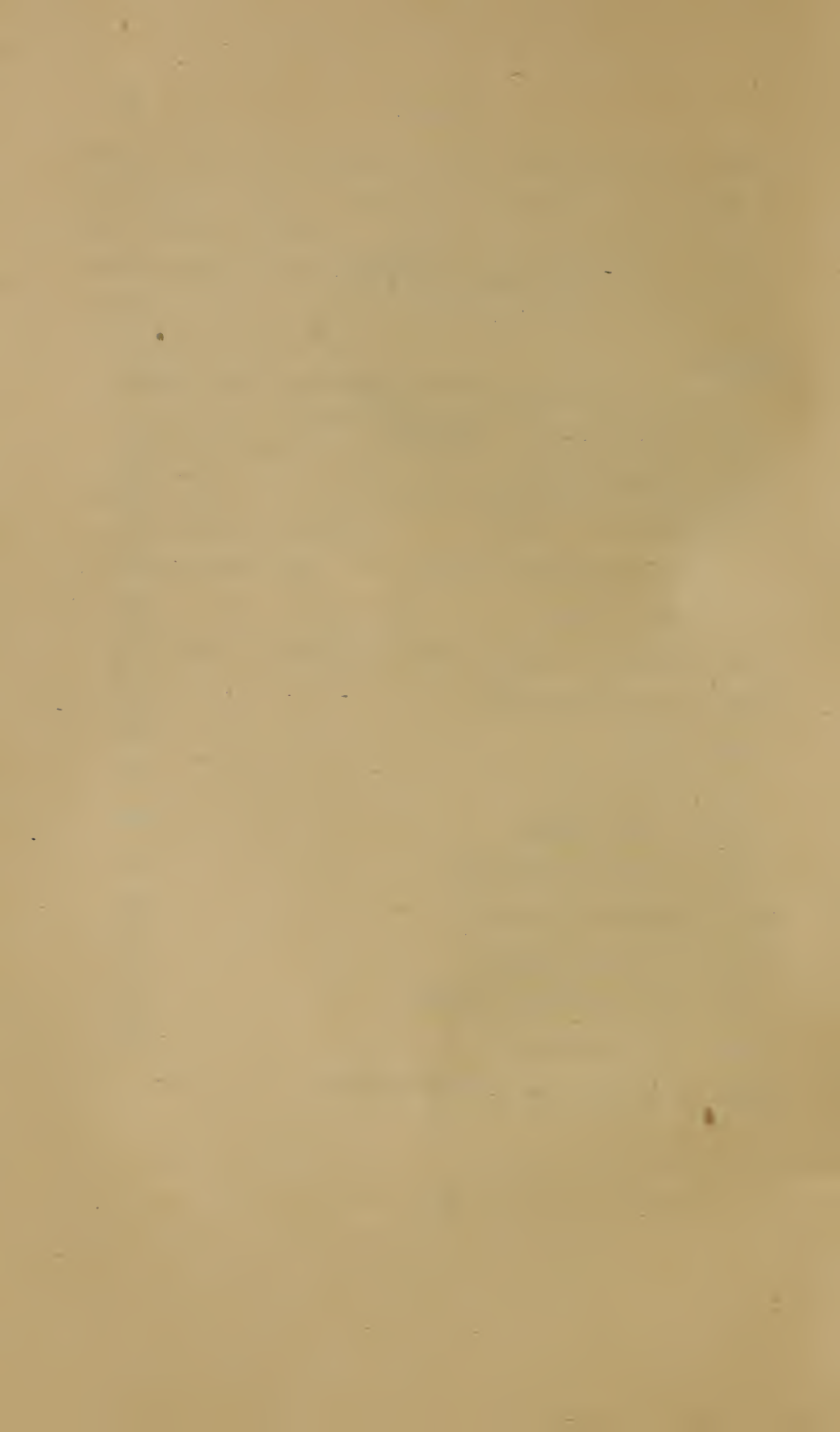
proves that the principle of both systems is the same, and that it must be beneficial or injurious to one country as well as to another. I am glad to notice that Mr. Bright has recently expressed this view of it. Speaking of Mr. Blaine's letter of acceptance he says that it reminds him of the old theories long maintained in England and finally discarded for a system more enlightened and more free. To make this parallel more plain to the American reader is the chief object of this work, while presenting at the same time a fair and truthful history of the Struggle for Free Trade in England.

M. M. T.

CHICAGO, Oct. 1884.

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# THE AMERICAN LESSON OF THE FREE TRADE STRUGGLE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE ANTI-CORN-LAW LEAGUE.

Period of the Free Trade Struggle—Free Trade as a Theory—Protection as a Practice—Opposition to it in the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century—The Merchants of London against it—Lord Liverpool's answer to them—The Citizens of Boston against it—Their reason—Parallels between the English and American Protective Theory—Contradictory character of the English Protective Laws in Early Times—Monopoly Franchises—Failure of their Expectations—The Competition of Trades for Protection—The Corn-Law of 1815—Future Opposition to it—Ebenezer Elliott—Organization of the Anti-Corn-Law League.

By the Free Trade struggle in England is meant the campaign from 1838 to 1846, or from the formation of the Anti-Corn-Law League, to the final overthrow of the Protective System. Of course there were enlightened people before that time who doubted the wisdom of a restrictive policy which excluded foreign products by a hostile tariff on imports; but they were comparatively few. They were easily brushed aside by those who believed in the blessings of scarcity, and who looked upon abundance as one of the calamities of mankind. The believers in commercial freedom were told that their doctrines were all very well in

theory, but would never do in practice, and with this convenient argument they had to be content. No doubt that in the "dark ages" of political economy, when "Protection" flourished in direct proportion to the popular ignorance, there were men in England who saw clear over the fogs in the valley the humanizing influence of Free Trade shining on the heights beyond; even as Galileo and Columbus saw farther and clearer than the men around them. They, too, were told that the sciences they cultivated were all very well in theory, but if subjected to experiment would be found quite unavailable in practice.

Indeed, more than a hundred years ago, Adam Smith had refuted the argument on which the protective theory was based, and which up to his time had been known by a sort of paradox as the "Mercantile System." Carried to its logical results its effect was to hinder mercantile transactions, and to cripple commerce, by closing ports to international trade. In the time of Henry Clay it was known in this country as the "American System," and in our own day it is called by the captivating title of "Protection to native industry." Mr. Huskisson, one of the most enlightened members of the English ministry, made some advances towards Free Trade, as early as the year 1825; and even before that time, the merchants of London had petitioned Parliament in behalf of commercial freedom. Their argument was remarkably forcible and clear. They said:—

“That unfortunately, a practice, the very reverse of freedom from restraint, has been, and is, more or less adopted and acted upon by the governments of this, and almost every other country; each trying to exclude the productions of other countries, with the specious and well-meant design of encouraging its own productions,—thus inflicting upon the bulk of its citizens who are consumers the necessity of submitting to privations in the quantity and quality of commodities; and thus rendering what ought to be the source of mutual benefit and harmony among States, a constantly recurring source of jealousy and hostility. That the prevailing prejudices in favor of the protective or restrictive system, may be traced to the erroneous supposition that every importation of foreign commodities occasions a diminution or discouragement of our own productions to the same extent; whereas it may be clearly shown, that although the particular description of production which could not stand against unrestrained foreign competition would be discouraged, yet, as no importation could be continued for any length of time without a corresponding exportation, direct or indirect, there would be an encouragement for the purpose of that exportation, to some other production, to which our situation might be better suited; thus affording at least an equal, or probably a greater, and certainly a more beneficial employment to our own capital and labor.”

The petition ended with an earnest protest against "every restrictive regulation of trade not essential to the revenue; against all duties merely protective; and against the excess of such duties as are partly for the purpose of revenue, and partly for that of protection." In answer to the petition, Lord Liverpool, then Prime Minister, said, that "he agreed in every sentiment expressed in the petition; and that if he were forming a Commercial Code, such would be its fundamental principles." Perhaps the most insidious enemy to every reform is that valueless concession which agrees to the principle of it, and regrets that the present "is not the time;" as Mr. Eaton is reported to have said in Congress, when opposing Mr. Morrison's bill, "He hoped that the United States would be a Free Trade country—forty years from now."

Some people entertain the delusion that although the laws of mathematics and the physical sciences are applicable to all countries, yet that the same inflexible quality does not belong to the laws of moral science. They believe that these can be changed according to the whim of legislatures, and the exigencies of climate and geography. They think that the principles of Free Trade may be philosophical and wise in one country, and the reverse in another; that "infancy" is a good plea in behalf of Protection in a new country, but not in an old one; that agriculture ought to be protected at the expense of manufactures in England, and manufactures protected at the expense



of agriculture in America. But the laws of political economy cannot be bent to suit latitude and longitude. The freedom of trade that benefits England would benefit the United States. Commercial principles cannot vary between Liverpool and New York, nor between Boston and Montreal. It is very curious that while the citizens of London were petitioning their Parliament for commercial freedom, the citizens of Boston were petitioning Congress for the same right. It gives a rude shock to the vanity of an American revenue reformer of the present day, to find that his arguments were anticipated by his countrymen nearly sixty years ago. In 1827, when our "infant industries" were much more infantile than they are now, a committee of the citizens of Boston thus protested against the injustice of a protective tariff. They declared it false to say, that "dear goods made at home, are better than cheap ones made abroad; that capital and labor cannot be employed in this country without protective duties; that it is patriotic to tax the many for the benefit of the few; that it is just to aid by legislation manufactures that do not succeed without it; that we ought to sell to other nations, but never to buy from them." They go on to say "these are, we have long since known, fundamental principles among the advocates of the American system. It is, however, extraordinary that these ancient and memorable maxims, sprung from the

darkest ages of ignorance and barbarism, should take their last refuge here."

It is not so very extraordinary after all. Every nation must pass through commercial barbarism to commercial civilization, from Protection to Free Trade. The desire to get rich at somebody else's expense is well nigh universal. It is easy to persuade most people that to "protect" their own artisans from the competition of "foreign pauper labor" is an act of patriotism. This admitted, it is easily narrowed down to our own State, our own county, our own city, our own village, or even our own street. In the last century the farmers of Middlesex, the county in which London is situated, petitioned Parliament against improving the abominable roads of England. They frankly claimed that so long as the roads were bad they had a monopoly of the London markets for the sale of their vegetables, fruit, and grain; that if the roads were improved, the farmers of other counties would be able to bring their produce to the London markets, which would be disastrous to the "industry" of Middlesex. This looks very foolish on the face of it, and yet it is the doctrine of American Protectionists to-day.

To attempt to encourage by protective laws, agriculture, manufactures, shipping, experimental enterprises, special trades, "infant" industries, and so on, was persevered in by England at a wasteful expense for centuries, and it was only abandoned when it was found out that Protection

was the paralysis of industry. To suppose that the United States was born wise in these matters, would be as unreasonable as to think that it could be born old. It must go through the same education in economics that England went through. Its school term will not be so long as that of England was, but it must be the same. The protective doctrine, too, has the same advantage here that it had in England. So long as it prevailed the nation grew in wealth, power, and population. Not until Protection was abandoned did the people see that their progress had been made in spite of it, and that it would have been much greater, had commerce been free. So it will be here. Under "Protection," and in spite of it, this country is growing in wealth and power. When Protection is abandoned the people will be astonished as they were in England, at the multiplication of their wealth and comforts under a Free Trade policy.

The "Protection" laws of England for five hundred years would make an entertaining book, especially if it showed the contrary efforts made to effect the same object. Sometimes exports of raw materials were forbidden in order that they might be abundant in the Kingdom, to the encouragement of the trades which used them, while the importation of the same raw materials was forbidden lest they might become abundant to the discouragement of the industries that produced them. In one reign, shoemakers were forbidden



to exercise the trade of a tanner, "in order to promote and improve the manufacture of leather." In a subsequent reign, shoemakers were encouraged to engage in the tanning business by act of Parliament "to promote the manufacture of leather;" and again, for the very same object, shoemakers were forbidden by law to exercise the tanner's trade.

All sorts of contradictory laws were passed at various periods to "protect" the wool manufacturer and the wool grower at the same time. Even so late as the reign of King George the First, an act was passed "for the encouragement of the woollen and silk trades." Any person wearing a garment of calico was subjected to a serious fine. It was overlooked, that this law, besides interfering with the right of the citizen to wear what he chose, and what he could best afford to buy, actually discouraged the calico industry in order to protect a rival trade. A board of trade was erected by King James the First, in 1622. Hume informs us that one of the reasons assigned in the commission is, "to remedy the low price of wool, which begat complaints of the decay of the woollen manufactory."—the patent falsehood that dear wool is a good thing for the men who make cloth, and the tailors who make coats, being as ignorantly asserted then, as it is impudently asserted now.

In the year 1363, in the reign of Edward the Third, when the exportation of wool was strenuously forbidden, a law was passed which regulated



the clothing of the people and prescribed what apparel might or might not be worn by them according to their respective conditions and rank in life. The pretense for this law was, that people were becoming extravagant in dress, and that luxury in this direction should be restrained. This law was repealed in the following year, either because it could not be executed, or because it was an injury to trade. But a hundred years later it was re-enacted, because it was discovered that the people indulged in excessive array "to the great displeasure of God, the impoverishing of England, and the enriching of strange realms." The "protection" character of this law is easily seen in the reasons given for its enactment. The English were buying goods abroad because they could get them there cheaper and better than they could buy them at home. The Protectionists of that era, like their descendents in this, regarded all purchases made abroad as a waste of money, which went to "the enriching of strange realms." It never occurred to them that the articles they bought came to the "enrichment" of their own country. In the blind economy of the time, men could not see that riches might consist of other things than money.

The manufacture of certain commodities was restricted to certain places, to "protect" them from the competition of other places, and to encourage their industry. In the reign of Henry the Eighth, an act was passed restricting the

making of cloths to Worcester, and a few other favored towns; and in the same reign the trade in worsted yarn was limited to Norwich and the county of Norfolk; and it was provided, that no person should weave or manufacture it, save the artificers belonging to said city or county.

In vain and tiresome gyrations, like a dog trying to catch his tail, the Protectionists of old whirled round and round trying to give special aid to some callings without injuring others. In the reign of Edward the Sixth the saddlers were protected by a monopoly of the trade in leather, and their business flourished to such an extent that all who doubted the wisdom of the law were silent and ashamed. "See what Protection has done for the saddler trade," said the advocates of the law, and the Free Traders could not answer them. After awhile it was noticed that what was a good thing for the saddlers was a bad thing for the cobblers, and they presented a petition to Parliament complaining that the monopoly had "wrought their utter impoverishment and undoing." So, therefore, in the reign of Mary, the obnoxious law was repealed, in order to "protect" the cobblers from the extortions of the saddlers.

It was also learned by costly experience that the leather monopoly enjoyed by the saddlers had not only operated as an unjust tax on the cobblers and shoemakers, and on everybody who wore shoes, but that leather had deteriorated in quality as it had increased in price. In consequence of

the petition of the cobblers, the law was repealed, and in the act repealing it, Parliament acknowledged that it had learned a good lesson in political economy. After reciting the fact about the cobblers, the act gives this additional reason for abolishing the monopoly of the saddlers, "and forasmuch also as sithence (since) the making of said estatute all kind of leather is more slenderly and deceitfully wrought and made than ever before, nevertheless as dear or dearer." This preamble will apply to every protected monopoly in the world.

It is not necessary to multiply examples. The English laws are full of vain and mischievous attempts to make rivers run up hill, to divert moral science from its principles, and make the beneficent streams of trade, commerce, and manufactures flow the wrong way. They failed, as such attempts must ever fail. They gave to certain special classes an artificial prosperity, but this prosperity was abstracted from the community at large. The belief in witchcraft was accompanied by the kindred superstition that "government" always kept on hand a large surplus of prosperity created by itself, which it could ladle out at pleasure to help destitute people, professions and trades. It was not then known in England, as it is not yet known in America, that "government" can create nothing; and that if it pours a cupful of prosperity upon this trade or that one, it must dip it up from the common fund of prosperity



created by the labor of all the rest of the people. There is positively no bounty, help, or endowment having a money value, that government can give to one without taking it from others. When government used to sell monopolies this truth was more apparent than it is now, because the money received for the franchise was a confession that the buyer of it must get it back with profit out of the consumers whom he was allowed to overcharge for the article on which he had the monopoly. That government gives the monopoly for nothing does not change the principle, but it makes it harder to detect. It really makes no difference to the consumer whether the Pennsylvania miner and manufacturer pay the government for a protective tariff or get it for nothing. If there is any money value in it to them, that value must come out of the people who are compelled to buy of them whatever they have to sell.

Although the so-called protective system prevailed in England for centuries, it must be remembered that it never had a peaceful reign. Its victims always protested against it, and it never altogether satisfied even its beneficiaries and advocates. The hundreds of laws enacting, amending, and repealing its details prove this. There is no doubt also, that while the system was necessarily perverted to the unjust privilege and profit of special classes, its authors originally designed it for the encouragement of home industry. They never looked beneath the surface of the

scheme. They saw at the first glance that a certain trade was benefited when freed from foreign competition and they thought that therefore beneath the surface there must be concealed an economic principle that required the legislature to protect every business that suffered from foreign rivalry. Then began the scramble of "interests" for special protective enactments. The archives of the British Parliament will show that there is scarcely an interest in the country that has not petitioned for a monopoly of its own trade. The protective system which roused the fierce opposition of the English manufacturers from 1836 to 1846 was really the work of their fathers. For centuries, the manufacturers of woolens, cottons, and other fabrics, believed that Protection and monopoly were indispensable to their trade; and they resisted every attempt at commercial reform.

As the land owners of England comprised an overwhelming majority in both houses of Parliament, it was natural that they should gradually direct the protective legislation of the country so as to give them a monopoly of the home market in every article constituting the food of the people. This they did; and the vice of their system reached its climax in the Corn-Laws of 1815. When the battle of Waterloo had brought the war of the French revolution to an end, and it became necessary to adapt the commercial system of England to an era of peace, it was agreed that inasmuch as the landlords had not the power to

decree how many bushels of wheat should grow on an acre of land, they would, in retaliation for this oversight of Providence, declare and establish by law how much a bushel the consumer should pay for whatever quantity the acre might happen to yield. It was conceded that the farmers could not pay the high rents demanded by the landlords unless the minimum price of wheat was fixed at eighty shillings a quarter ; and they established it at that figure. This was about two dollars and a half a bushel, American money ; or as wages was then, about three days' work of a mechanic for a bushel of wheat. The protective tariff was "so adjusted" as to insure that price. The law had been altered two or three times in the interval, but the principle of it remained from 1815 to 1846.

The law was fiercely and continuously assailed, but the opposition to it was only a sentimental protest, having no practical value. The cry of hunger was unheeded by the legislature. The law was discussed by the press and the magazines, but only occasionally, and rather as a question of ethics and abstract political economy, not as a "live issue," having any present bearing on the welfare of the people. After the passage of the Reform Bill in 1832, the cry grew louder, and the passionate verses of Ebenezer Elliott stirred the feelings of the people, and aroused a sentiment of indignation against the Corn-Law. Unfortunately for Elliott he was known as the "Corn-Law Rhymer," and the nickname, of which indeed he



was proud, has led the world to believe that he was a rhymester, and nothing more. But Elliott was a true poet, and the poetic flame burned within him ardent and bright as the fire in his forge at Sheffield. Carlyle, in a review of his verses, declared that he was a real poet, and one who had something to say; a poet whose voice it would be well for the government to heed. Colonel Perronet Thompson in his "Catechism of the Corn-Laws" also started an agitation that steadily increased in power. The scattering fire of an irregular skirmish line advancing against the Corn-Laws could be heard, from London, northwest to Liverpool, and from there to Glasgow. Nevertheless it was not until about the year 1836 that the Free Traders made any well organized effort against the insular and bigoted system of restriction which had burdened the industries of England for hundreds of years. Up to that time the liberal and scientific principles of Free Trade were regarded as political abstractions, beautifully adapted to some undiscovered Utopia, which might be expected to appear about the time of the millennium. Up to that time, the efforts of the Free Traders were feeble and scattered over an extensive field, fortified by the Protectionists so strongly in every direction, that the reformers made but slight impression upon the works of the enemy. The wealth, profits, and social force derived from a hundred monopolies had combined and consolidated into a political power, controlling

both branches of the legislature, the church, the aristocracy, and the crown. Not only that, but Protection had shielded itself with a national sentiment borrowed from a popular patriotism jealous of "foreign competition." It appeared to be invincible. In 1839 the isolated forces of Free Trade became a coherent and disciplined organization under the name of the Anti-Corn-Law League. They massed themselves for a concentrated attack upon the Corn Laws, the key to the whole Protective System. The Corn Laws were to Protection what the Malakoff was to Sebastopol. When that fell, the city fell. The repeal of the Corn-Laws meant the doom of Protection and the triumph of Free Trade. The efforts of the League were directed to the success of a specific measure, the repeal of the duties upon corn. Under the general term "corn" in England is comprehended flour, wheat, oats, and breadstuffs of every kind.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE PROTECTION TRIUMPH.

Death of King William, and Accession of Queen Victoria—The General Election—Issues—Whigs and Tories—Resignation of the Ministers in 1839—Sir Robt. Peel fails to form a Government—The Whigs Resume their Places—Charles Pelham Villiers—Begins the Attack on the Corn-Laws—Activity of the League in 1839 and 1840—Strength of Monopoly—The Session of 1839—Inauspicious Beginning—Renewal of the Attack—Peel's Reply to Mr. Villiers—Manchester Petitioners Refused a Hearing at the Bar—Agitation Outside—Methods of the League—Lord John Russell's Notice for a Committee on the Corn-Laws—Alarm of the Tories—Government on the Defensive—Debate in the House of Lords—Debate in the House of Commons—Slavery and Sugar—Defeat of the Government on Lord Sandon's Amendment—Ministers Refuse to Resign—Want of Confidence Resolution Carried—Dissolution of Parliament.

JUST at the dawn of midsummer, 1837, the King died, and the Victorian era began. With the old King there went out an age of ignorance, vice, and political superstition. With the young Queen there came in a better, brighter, and more enlightened day. There was vice enough left, indeed, but it was no longer respectable. The Parliament died with the King, and a new Parliament was chosen. The contest was between the Whigs on one side, and the Tories on the other. The issues

were like many of the issues between the Democrats and Republicans in our own country now,—rather of the past, historical, than of the present, real. The offices, however, were at stake, and the Whigs won. They had a majority in the new Parliament of about thirty in the House of Commons. This in a membership of six hundred and fifty-eight, was not so large as might be wished; but by keeping close in shore, and not venturing upon the wide ocean of statesmanship, they could get along with it comfortably well, and enjoy the power, the honors, and the emoluments of office.

The commercial policy of the country was not much of an issue in the election. The Tories were all Protectionists and so were most of the Whigs. They differed only in degree, not in principle. Thirty-eight Free Traders obtained seats in the new Parliament. They ranged themselves with the Whigs, as did the Irish repealers, and the Liberals of every grade. What progressive elements existed in the politics of the time, were supposed to be represented in the Whig party. The Tories, if not reactionary, were at least, conservative.

The trifling difference between the two great parties was amusingly shown. In 1839, the ministers came within five votes of defeat on the Jamaica bill, and at once resigned. Sir Robert Peel was sent for to form a new administration. He had been Prime Minister in 1835, and was the leader of the Tory party. He accepted the task

of forming a government, but required that certain Whig ladies of the Queen's household should be removed from office—in other words, they should go out with the ministry that had brought them in. The Queen would not consent to this, whereupon Sir Robert gave up his task, and the Whigs resumed their places. Those drawing-room politics were now about to be rudely shaken by the new power just born into the State: the Anti-Corn-Law League. A "live issue" was about to be presented to the people, something of greater consequence than the question, what ladies should form the Queen's household. The question was whether or not the food of the people, and their other comforts of life, should be made scarce and dear by import duties on foreign grain, and meat, and wool, and other things, levied for the "Protection" of special classes, whether or not the shackles which had fettered industry for centuries should be removed and the commerce of England made free.

It is somewhat curious that the first leader in Parliament of the commercial reformation came not from the mercantile or manufacturing classes, neither was he a man "of the people." He was of the titled aristocracy, a brother of the Earl of Clarendon. The Hon. Charles Pelham Villiers, member for Wolverhampton, a young man of 35 or so, was the head and front of the Free Trade party. He had eminent capacity for leadership, a thorough knowledge of the question, an intense

conviction of the wisdom and the justice of his cause, good temper, and what Lord Beaconsfield freely accorded him, a "terse eloquence, and vivid perception." He was almost the first man of his time in Parliament who had vision bright enough to see that the feudal system of commerce was crippling the industries of Britain, and he was the only one who had faith to believe that the system could be overthrown. He was in the House of Commons six years before Cobden appeared within its walls, and eight years before John Bright obtained a seat there. Although in actual debate he was contented to fall behind those powerful tribunes, yet the leadership of the party in Parliament was never taken from him.

On the 13th of December, 1838, the Manchester Chamber of Commerce resolved to petition Parliament for a repeal of the Corn-Laws, and in January, 1839, a meeting of deputies from all parts of the Kingdom was held in Manchester, to consider the best means of obtaining the repeal. On the assembling of Parliament in the same year, the delegates met at Westminster, and organized the Anti-Corn-Law League. Mr. Villiers was unanimously chosen leader of the cause in the House of Commons. Referring to this meeting, a London paper, in a brief sketch of Mr. Villiers, said, "It needed no common courage to undertake the leadership. There were but few Free Traders in the House. The ministry and the expectants of office were alike opposed to Mr. Villiers. What-



ever party there might be for some change in the Corn-Laws, there was in reality no party for the total and immediate repeal. Free Traders on principle—those who would admit no compromise were few, either in the House or out of doors. Public opinion and a Parliamentary party had both to be made.”

Previous to this memorable meeting, Mr. Villiers had begun the great Parliamentary struggle for Free Trade. On the 15th of March, 1838, he moved that the House go into committee on the Corn-Laws. Like Mr. Benton with his expunging resolution, Mr. Villiers renewed this famous motion every year until the victory was won. He began by remarking “that it might be said that this was not a fit time to bring forward the subject, because the public mind was in a state of repose with respect to it. The purpose of the Corn-Laws was protection to the landed interest. He then showed that the House of Commons was composed principally of landlords, and he contended that the Corn-Laws were measures adopted by themselves in the selfish pursuit of their own profit and advantage at the expense of all the rest of the people.

In ridicule of the claim that in order to “protect” the landlords, foreign grain must be excluded from the Kingdom until the domestic article had reached a certain price, Mr. Villiers made this happy comparison, “Suppose a majority of hand-loom weavers in Parliament. Might they

not be expected on this principle to prohibit power-looms, or, at all events, enact that until cloth produced by hand labor reached a certain price, that produced by power should bear a fluctuating duty?" He contended that the resources of the country would be best developed "by employing the population in those pursuits for which the country afforded the greatest facilities." This really seems like an economic axiom, and yet it was then denied in England, and is now denied in America. The contrary doctrine is maintained, and we are passionately told that the "pursuits" that do not pay, must be made to pay, by the taxation of the pursuits that do. Mr. Villiers charged that the hostile policy of other nations was provoked by the Protective System of Great Britain. He said, "Our own prohibition system has driven Prussia and the United States to have recourse to a corresponding one, nor would they consent to take our manufactures unless we consented to receive their grain." The motion for the committee was refused by 300 to 95. To this majority the Tories furnished 226, the Whigs 74. There were 263 members who did not think the matter worth voting on at all.

The League, once formed, soon showed that it was terribly in earnest, and its activity disquieted "the two great parties." Its agents were in every town. It circulated pamphlets, by the million. It assumed the task of instructing a whole people in the elements of political economy. Its orators

were everywhere. In every corner of the Kingdom they challenged the Protectionists to public discussion, and threw them painfully on the defensive. In the manufacturing districts its meetings numbered thousands. Those masses of people did not have political influence in proportion to their numbers, for few of them had votes. Before the League was two years old, it had become a great power outside the walls of Parliament, although, inside, it had no strength, except in the character and ability of its advocates, and the irresistible logic of its argument.

The work before it was appalling. Monopoly was so strongly intrenched in England as to seem invincible. It was supreme in both houses of Parliament. The privileged orders and the "protected" classes were, of course, all defenders of it. The middle classes—the real John Bull—were very much imbued with the idea that British patriotism required them to support the policy that made them "independent of foreign countries." Worse than all, the masses of the people, the working classes, were Protectionists, as will appear a little farther on. They were everlastingly haunted by a ghost called "over-production;" they believed that scarcity was a good thing because it created a demand for labor, and they dreaded lest they be brought into competition with the "pauper labor" of foreign countries.

The Parliamentary session of 1839 opened inauspiciously for the Free Traders. They were

weak enough at the best; and as bad luck would have it, they were literally extinguished by the indiscretion of one of their own men. In the vernacular of the American school boy, he "gave them away." The manner of it was this. The form of opening Parliament is by a speech from the throne. After that, an address to the Queen in answer to it is adopted by each house. The mover and seconder of the address are selected by the Ministers at a Cabinet council, and to be chosen for that duty is regarded as something of a personal and political distinction. The honor of moving the address in the House of Commons is generally conferred upon some member connected with the aristocracy or the "landed interest;" that of seconding it is generally given to some member identified with what the Americans call the "business interests" of the country, somebody interested in merchandise or manufacture. In the present case the distinction of seconding the address was bestowed upon Mr. G. W. Wood, a Free Trader, and Chairman of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce.

Of course it is expected of the mover and seconder of the address that they will polish up the politics of the ministerial side, and make them look as bright and tidy as possible. Mr. Wood, thinking that it was his duty to make a good showing on such an important occasion, declared that everything was flourishing and prosperous; that trade, commerce, agriculture, and manufactures, were at the present moment in a most sat-



isfactory condition, and he produced the statistics to prove it all. He said that the tranquillity of the country on the subject of the Corn-Laws was owing to a fortunate cheapness in the price of food. Mr. Wood was flattered by generous cheering, but what confused and bewildered him was, that it all came from the wrong side of the House. His encouragement came from Sir Robert Peel and the Tories, and not from his own party. His own friends were writhing in pain, because Mr. Wood, being a Free Trader, was expected to talk the other way. The Tory leader could well quote the pious exclamation of Cromwell at the battle of Dunbar, "The Lord hath delivered them into our hands."

Sir Robert Peel was not slow to avail himself of the advantage given him by Mr. Wood. With affected gravity he congratulated everybody on the prosperous condition of everything, and showed from the statistics of Mr. Wood the value of the "Protective" System. He said, "Coming, as this speech did, not only from the seconder of the address, but from the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce at Manchester, nothing could go further to confirm those who were favorable to the continuance of the present state of things in their opinions, and to awaken the doubts and suspicions of those who had been desirous of an alteration."

Mr. Villiers tried to counteract the mischief done by Mr. Wood, but failed. He condemned Sir Robert Peel for condescending to avail himself

of the miserable and fallacious reasoning of Mr. Wood. He then tried to show where the fallacies lay, but he was embarrassed by Mr. Wood's admissions, and after stumbling over that gentleman's "facts" until he was tired and sore, he sat down. He was in the situation of the senior counsel trying to correct the mistakes of his associate brother, whose awkward ingenuity has drawn from his own witness some testimony very damaging to his own side.

Lord John Russell, the Whig leader, who had chosen Mr. Wood to second the address, probably enjoyed his innocent blunders as much as anybody. At all events he declined to help him out of his tangle. He contented himself with some vague generalities to the effect that "the time had arrived" when things must be looked into, and when it should be considered whether the present system acted beneficially or not. With this feeble flicker the debate ended. The Free Traders had lost ground.

Mr. Villiers was not disconcerted, and in a few days he returned to the attack. His courage was proof steel, and his temper perfect. He knew that the "protection" argument was a contradiction and denial of the very mathematics of political economy. It delighted him to see his adversaries tripping one another up with contrary reasons why the Protective System ought to be maintained; to make things cheap and to make them dear, plentiful and scarce, to promote the acquisition of

riches by transferring wealth out of one pocket into another, and to keep in perpetual motion that circular benevolence which robs Peter to pay Paul, and Paul to pay Timothy, and Timothy to pay Peter, and thus round and round forever. A biographer said of Mr. Villiers that he was "a political economist, not only by study, but by a natural aptness, amounting almost to instinct." On the 19th of February, 1839, he renewed the conflict by moving that certain persons be heard at the bar of the House in support of a petition complaining of the operation of the Corn-Laws.

In supporting his motion, Mr. Villiers said, "In comparing ourselves with America, we find her possessed of great natural advantages; proximity to the raw material, and cheapness of power." He showed that the Protective System had made England a dear country to live in, and that its operation was to help the rival manufacturers of Germany, Switzerland, and the United States. Mr. Villiers could not then anticipate that the Americans would with perverse deliberation set themselves to work to nullify their "great natural advantages;" that they would with inverted statesmanship contrive and establish a policy for the very purpose of making the United States "a dear country to live in;" and that by the ingenious folly of a high protective tariff they would shut their manufactures out of the great markets of the world.

Sir Robert Peel resisted the motion, but on this

occasion he had the serious task of answering the strong arguments of a political economist and a statesman. The weak and imprudent concessions of Mr. Wood would not avail him now. He said that he could not admit that English manufacturers were in an alarming state, and that "our former customers were about to drive us from the markets." "The object of the gentlemen opposite," he said, "is to increase the price of grain in foreign countries in order to check the progress of their manufactures. Not a very benevolent object, I must confess." He then said, "We use 52,000,000 quarters of grain yearly. Would it be wise that this country should be called upon to make the experiment how far in case of war and famine it might rely upon procuring the necessary amount of food from foreign countries?" It was the very irony of fate that seven years after this, when the Protective System had culminated in "famine," Sir Robert Peel himself as Prime Minister, should be compelled to throw his country for salvation upon food "from foreign countries."

It is evidence how insignificant was the influence of the Free Traders in England at this time, that although they supported the Whig party, and the Whigs were in power, they could not obtain respectful consideration in the House of Commons. The motion of Mr. Villiers that the Manchester petitioners might be heard at the bar, was lost by 361 to 172, and Lord John Russell, and Lord Palmerston, the Whig leaders in the House, both



voted in the majority, both destined to be afterwards Free Trade Prime Ministers of England.

The difficulties in the way only stimulated the industry of the League, and within two years it had become a source of alarm to the Tories, and of perplexity the Whigs. Many of the Whig members sympathized with in a general sort of way and to a limited extent. They were, however, timid and irresolute. They carried on the government in a lazy, languid manner, and were anxious to be let "alone." They thought they could live for ever on the Reform Bill triumph of 1832, but the Reform Bill was only a beginning, not an end. The fierce discussion of that measure had stimulated the mental faculties of the people, and a craving thirst for knowledge took possession of them.

*The Penny Magazine* was in active circulation, lectures were popular, Mechanics' Institutes were multiplying, and, in the expressive language of Lord Brougham, the schoolmaster was abroad in the land. The Whigs were afraid to risk their small majority by the introduction of any great measure of public policy, and by reason of that very timidity, their trifling majority was gradually dwindling away. They asked permission to doze in comfort on the treasury benches, but the noise of the League disturbed their slumbers, and the Tories were waiting and watching their own opportunity which was close at hand.

Suddenly it occurred to the Whigs that in this

new active world of politics, even governments must do something for a living. They saw the great moral power already in the hands of the League, and Lord John Russell thought that if he could borrow some of that, he might spiritualize the Whig party and save the administration. Accordingly, in the month of April, 1841, he gave notice that on the 31st of May he would move that the House resolve itself into a committee to take into consideration the duties on the importation of foreign grain. This announcement startled the Tories, for it showed that the doctrines of the League had permeated the administration itself. They closed their ranks, and assumed the offensive. Lord Sandon, member for Liverpool, asked Lord John Russell what the government intended to do with the Corn-Laws? He answered that they proposed to abolish the "sliding scale," and impose a moderate fixed duty of eight shillings a quarter (24 cents a bushel) upon wheat, and, a proportionate duty upon other grain. The "sliding scale" was a contrivance by which the duties on foreign grain were fixed according to the prices of it in the domestic market. When the price of wheat in Mark Lane was high, the duties on imported wheat were low, and *vice versa*, the intention being to keep the price of grain always at such a height as to furnish the British farmer a fair degree of "Protection" against the "pauper labor" and untaxed lands of foreign countries.



In this moderate proposition of Lord John Russell the Tories saw a menace against the monopolies which they had enjoyed for centuries. With the bravery of desperation they determined to come out of their intrenchments and attack. They would not wait until the 31st of May, but determined to precipitate the issue there and then. Sir Robert Peel, amid great excitement, declared that unless Lord John Russell consented to submit his motion at once he might be compelled to do so; for the House would not make itself the instrument of agitation. Mr. Labouchere, a member of the Cabinet, anticipated General Hancock by a period of thirty-nine years. He tried to allay the excitement by declaring that "the revision of the tariff is not a party question." He was laughed at for the statement as General Hancock was in the next generation.

So long as the agitation for the repeal of the Corn-Laws was confined to the Anti-Corn-Law League outside of Parliament, the public mind retained its usual tranquillity; but when an attack upon the protective tariff was made by the Government itself, the affair became serious, and all classes of society became greatly agitated and some of them alarmed. Both parties went into training at once, for the approaching contest. The League redoubled its exertions. It organized new branches of the association, and sent lecturers and pamphlets into every part of the Kingdom. On the other hand, all the protected "interests" combined for

mutual defense. Meetings were convened of parties connected with the Shipping and North American "interests," of the planters, merchants, and others interested in the West India Colonies, of the representatives of East India property, of the societies for the abolition of slavery, and all the threatened monopolies consolidated for "Protection."

It was unlucky for the Government that it was on the defensive from the start; and shortly on the run. Like Louis Napoleon in 1870, it declared war, and instead of invading the enemies territories, took up a defensive line of battle, was beaten, routed, and destroyed. The opposition in Parliament at once advanced, and their first attack was made in the House of Lords. On the 3d of May, the Duke of Buckingham presented 120 petitions against the repeal of the Corn-Laws. He improved the occasion to attack Lord Melbourne for his inconsistency in consenting to alter the Corn-Laws after the strong language he had formerly used against any such revolutionary project.

It so happened that Lord Melbourne was at this time Prime Minister of England, and he presented an exceedingly big target for the shafts of the Duke of Buckingham, because, only the year before, he had said contemptuously, that the repeal of the Corn-Laws was "the most insane project that ever entered a man's head." And he also said that "it would be as easy to repeal the monarchy." Lord Melbourne made a rather lame apology for his

present position, but maintained that he had never committed himself to the opinion that the Corn-Laws were perfect, and should never be amended.

The Earl of Ripon then asked Lord Melbourne whether the proposed alteration of the Corn-Laws was to be on the principle of taxation for revenue, or for protection? He said, "The principle of 'Protection' rests on humane and consistent grounds, but by abandoning this, and taking up the principle of taking corn for revenue, you would do that which had never been attempted in any country of the world, and which would be the most impolitic, unjustifiable, and cruel act ever imposed upon a reluctant Parliament." The "cruelty" of giving the people abundant food was maintained by the Protectionists until that "humane" system actually culminated in famine. Lord Melbourne, in answering the Earl of Ripon, said that the alteration of the Corn-Laws "would be unquestionably upon the principle of Protection."

The Earl of Winchelsea, a weak-minded old gentleman, said "that it is a universal axiom that no country should be left dependent on others for the necessary articles of subsistence." He consoled the House, with the assurance that "the people are too reflecting to be deceived with the promise of cheap bread." "They know," said the noble Earl, that "cheap bread means low wages." The report of the debate is authority for the state-

ment that this nonsense was received with "loud cheering." It would be incredible in this enlightened day, did we not know that the same argument is greeted with "loud cheering" in the halls of the American Congress.

The attack in the House of Commons was made on the 8th of May, when Mr. Baring, Chancellor of the Exchequer, presented his annual budget. The discussion of the budget resolved itself into a debate on the corn and sugar duties. There was a deficiency in the revenue, and Mr. Baring proposed to make it up by a reduction of the duties on sugar. This may seem to the American economist a strange way of increasing the revenue, but the plan of Mr. Baring was undoubtedly sound. The duty on sugar was a "Protective" duty for the benefit of the planters of the British West Indies. To the extent of that Protection it discouraged importation, and while the revenue suffered, the people received no benefit. They paid the tax, but it went into the pockets of the planters, and not into the treasury. The following figures make the matter clearer than a long sermon could. In 1841, under a high tariff, each inhabitant of Great Britain consumed 15lbs. of sugar; in 1881, under a low tariff, each inhabitant consumed 58lbs. or nearly four times as much. The low duties quadrupled the importation, and at the same time increased the revenue. Mr. Baring proposed to avail himself of this principle, and supply the deficiency of the revenue by reducing the duties on sugar. The



Protectionists all rallied to their colors to resist this encroachment on monopoly.

The challenge to the government came in the shape of the following motion offered by Lord Sandon, "That considering the sacrifices made by the country for the abolition of slavery, this House cannot consent to a reduction of the sugar duties." It is important to observe that the opposition to cheap sugar was placed by the Protectionists on high moral and humanitarian ground, the discouragement of slave labor. The opposition to cheap sugar in the United States is placed on the same ground. In 1881, an old slaveholder, sitting in the American Congress as a member from the State of Louisiana, made a heart-breaking appeal to the House, not to reduce the tariff on sugar, because if they did, it would encourage the wicked sugar of Cuba and Brazil, the product of the unpaid toil of the slave. He was overcome with emotion, and as he took his seat he wiped his weeping eyes. The very same appeal was made in the British Parliament in 1841, by the old slaveholders there, who had made their wealth out of their West India plantations, and who had strenuously resisted the Act of Emancipation passed in 1832.

The crocodile tears of those adamantine Tories actually softened the hearts of some of the genuine abolitionists, and Mr. O'Connell, who was a partisan of the government and a Free Trader, gave notice of a motion to the effect "that any

diminution of the duty on foreign sugar should be strictly limited to that which was the product of free labor." So ingeniously did the Tories manage to mix up Protection and philanthropy, the sorrows of the negro and sugar, that some of the veteran abolitionists, unable to separate them, actually voted against the government.

Lord John Russell uncovered this impudent hypocrisy and made fun of it. He said, "If the House is resolved against taking slave-grown sugar, what do you say to the admission of other articles of slave-labor? Slave-grown coffee for instance. Did the man who was horrified at drinking a cup of slave-grown coffee redeem the potation and relieve his conscience by putting in a lump of free-labor sugar?" He was sarcastic and severe upon the Tories for having opposed emancipation, although they now pretended to be shocked at using slave-grown sugar.

Lord Stanley and Sir Robert Peel were the principal speakers on the other side. Lord Stanley opposed the reduction of the sugar duties upon "Protection" grounds, and said that if it was necessary to foster a manufacture in its infancy by Protection it was especially necessary in the present case of the sugar trade. He also opposed it on anti-slavery grounds, and he denounced the scheme as "the last effort of expiring desperation on the part of a falling government." It should be stated here that Lord Stanley himself did vote for emancipation.

Sir Robert Peel opposed the reduction of the sugar duties on the same grounds as Lord Stanley. He said, "If I had been in office I should have taken the same course that I did take; and if I should be in office, I never contemplate changing it." Then addressing Lord John Russell personally, he said, "I don't propose to follow your example, to resist the proposition now under discussion this year, and come down the next with a motion for its adoption." There is a warning in the Bible, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," and the value of it was exemplified in the fate of Sir Robert Peel. The next year he was Prime Minister, and he did "come down to the House," and do the very thing that in taunting boast he told Lord John Russell he would not do.

The debate lasted from the 7th to the 18th of May, and upwards of eighty members addressed the House. When it ended the Tories had the best of it. Lord Sandon's resolution prevailed; and on the motion that "the speaker do now leave the chair" the government was beaten by the unexpected majority of 317 to 281. The cheers of the Protectionists rang out peal after peal like the laughter of a chime of bells; they reverberated through the great hall of William Rufus; they burst into Palace yard, and chased each other among the Gothic arches of the old Abbey across the way, where Pitt and Fox lay sleeping side by side.

To the amazement of the country the ministers did not resign, but on the next evening Mr. Baring with a brass-mounted hardihood that did him credit, coolly announced that on Monday night he should move the annual Sugar Duties. Lord Darlington in a great rage, and amid loud cries of "order" demanded to know when Lord John Russell intended to bring on the question of the Corn-Laws. His Lordship quietly answered, "On Friday, the 4th of June." Before that day, sentence of dismissal was pronounced by the House of Commons against him and his government, and he never got a chance to introduce his plans.

Sir Robert Peel determined not to allow the ministers any time to recover from their great defeat. At the earliest moment possible under the rules, he gave notice that on the ensuing Thursday (the 27th of May) he should move the following resolution: "That Her Majesty's ministers do not sufficiently possess the confidence of the House of Commons, to enable them to carry through the House, measures which they deem of essential importance to the public welfare; and that their continuance in office under such circumstances is at variance with the spirit of the Constitution." After four nights' debate his resolution was carried by a majority of one vote; the numbers were 312 to 311. From this blow the Whig party never recovered. It was stunned and bewildered by it. The ministers could not believe it real. It appeared to them impossible that within ten years



of the passage of the Reform Bill, the Tories should once more be in the ascendancy. They therefore refused to resign, but dissolved the Parliament. They appealed from the verdict of the House of Commons to the tribunal of the people at the polls, and there also the judgment was against them.

## CHAPTER III.

### A TORY MINISTRY.

The Election of 1841—Character of the Contest—Triumph of the Tories—Richard Cobden—Meeting of Parliament—Debate on the Address—The Duke of Wellington—Daniel O'Connell—Ministers Defeated—They Resign—Sir Robert Peel Becomes Prime Minister—Refuses to Disclose his Plans—Parliament Adjourns—League Agitation in the Recess—The Duke of Buckingham Secedes from the Cabinet—Effect on the Country—Effect on the League.

IN the midst of scarcity and business depression the election of 1841 was held. Though but few Free Traders were elected, the inspiration of the whole contest came from the Anti-Corn-Law League. By the moral strength of its ideas it seemed to crowd all other issues out of the way, and forced a discussion of the Free Trade question at nearly every polling place in the Kingdom, where there was any contest at all. The Whigs appeared before the country in a defensive and apologetic attitude. Having no beneficent measures of public policy to their credit in the late Parliament, they offered the country a large assortment of future statesmanship at a heavy discount for another term of power. Unfortunately, the constituencies had not much confidence in their promises or in their ability to perform them. They had done enough to alarm

every "protected" interest, and they had not done enough to win the Free Traders, nor even the moderate reformers, who, while opposed to Free Trade, desired a reduction and a revision of the tariff; and who thought that a liberal modification of the Corn-Laws ought to be granted. There was a feeling abroad that the proposal of the ministers to reduce the duties on corn and sugar, was a measure of expediency with no strong convictions behind it; a mere infusion of political starch to stiffen a limp administration.

The friends of the government, however, used the proposal as a campaign battle cry. They declared that the fall of the ministry under Sir Robert Peel's "Want of Confidence" resolution, was due to their advanced and liberal policy, in attempting to remove some oppressive disabilities from trade; and that they had been borne down by a combination of class interests, united for the preservation of a hundred monopolies. This claim to a certain extent was true, and it gave something of moral character to their cause, but it availed nothing. The election resulted in a surprising victory for the Tories. They had a majority in the House of Commons of nearly a hundred over all opposing elements combined, and on a square issue with the Free Traders they could command a majority of more than three hundred and fifty votes. Among the astonishing results of this election was the defeat of Lord Morpeth, and Lord Milton for the West Riding of Yorkshire, and Lord

Howick was overthrown in the contest for Northumberland. Westminster performed the supposed impossible feat of electing a Tory over Sir De Lacey Evans; Mr. O'Connell was defeated for Dublin, and even Lord John Russell himself had a very narrow escape in his contest for the City of London. In the late Parliament the City of London was represented by four Whigs; to the new Parliament it elected two Tories and two Whigs, and a Tory was at the head of the poll. Lord John Russell, notwithstanding his talents, and his position in the government, and with all the vast influence of the Bedford family to help him, came within eight of defeat in a poll of over twelve thousand votes. The Protectionist victory was complete; yet this was the Parliament that was destined within five years to overthrow the Protective System, and establish Free Trade in England as firmly as the British Islands are anchored in the sea.

In the new Parliament was a new man, a calico printer from the North, a moral and mental force so great, that he was afterwards regarded by all Englishmen as the most important personage that had been seen in the House of Commons since Oliver Cromwell had a seat there. His name was Richard Cobden. This man had already become the electric principle of the Anti-Corn-Law League. He was a leader without selfishness or personal ambition, a guide whom all men loved to follow. He was a statesman by instinct, an organizer with



the genius of Napoleon. He was an orator of such convincing powers that he converted more men to his views by simply talking to them, than any other man of his time, or perhaps of any time; not only tens of thousands of Manchester operatives, but even farmers, who had been persuaded that Free Trade would ruin them. Without any special advantages of personal grace, although he was not deficient in the grace of a perfectly natural and easy manner, and careless of the arts of rhetoric, there was an earnest truthfulness about him that made a great impression. He was fluent enough, without redundancy, and his language was of the best and easiest English. His voice was pleasant and clear, though not loud. He had a boundless store of practical knowledge, much of which he had picked up by personal observation in the United States, and on the continent of Europe. No matter how extravagant his assertions appeared to be, he had always the facts at hand to verify them. He grouped them together with great skill, and moulded them into irresistible arguments. He fastened responsibility upon his adversaries with terrible emphasis. In playful fancy, and in the power of enforcing his points by familiar illustrations drawn from every day life, he resembled Abraham Lincoln—or perhaps it would be more correct to say that Lincoln resembled him. He resembled him in the abundance of his humor, and the quaint sharpness of his satire. Above all things there was a candor and sincerity about him

that went far towards persuading men that he was right. He was pre-eminent in the faculty of concentrating the main argument of a whole debate into a few sentences. A deep love of humanity pervaded all he wrote, and all he said. His life was pure, his character without reproach. With the factory dust upon him, he faced the patrician monopolists on the Tory benches with a courage as high as that of the purest Norman of them all. He was as effective inside the House of Commons as out of it, and it is certain that he converted Sir Robert Peel, the leader of the Protectionist party, to a belief not only in the expediency of Free Trade, but in the wisdom and in the justice of it. In fact it boded ill to the Tories when they saw that their chief permitted his face to show how he was hurt by the shafts of Cobden, and it boded still farther mischief to them when they noticed how he sat spell bound listening to every word that fell from his enemy. We know now that Peel at last came completely under the fascination of Cobden's intellect, and permitted that intellect to dominate his own.

The ministerial defeats in the counties were not unexpected, but the Tory gains in the towns and cities were a great surprise. They proved that the cry of "cheap bread" had been successfully met by the counter cry of "low wages." The benighted superstition that cheap bread made low wages, was entertained not only by the Tory monopolists who had an object in proclaiming it, but by the

hungry workingmen themselves, whose interests were all in the opposite direction. Worse than that, men claiming to be statesmen conceded the doctrine even when advocating a reduction of the import duties on grain.

Notwithstanding the adverse verdict of the people at the polls, the Whigs declined to surrender office until the meeting of the new Parliament. If they must go out they would be kicked out in a regular and constitutional way, and kicked out they were accordingly. When Parliament met, the Tories offered in both Houses an amendment to the address in answer to the speech from the throne, and the debate upon it was very much like a repetition of that on the "want of confidence" resolution in May. Earl Spencer, in the House of Lords, moved the address in a good speech advocating a removal of the oppressive restrictions on the importation of corn. The address was seconded by the Marquis of Clanricarde, who, while defending the government programme, was weak enough to admit that "if corn became cheaper, wages would undoubtedly fall," but, he said, "if the workman for a certain sum was able to obtain a larger supply of food and clothing than he could before, then his condition would undoubtedly be bettered. And Lord Bruce, who seconded the amendment to the address in the House of Commons, declared, "That for his own part he would consent to no plan of Free Trade, because it would throw vast numbers of his fellow subjects out of

employ.” The above two specimens will show how far Whig and Tory statesmen in England had progressed in the study of political economy in the year 1841. They stood then, just where Democratic and Republican statesmen in America stand now, victims of the same sophistries and the same delusions. Of course there was a man in the House of Commons ready to lay the whole blame for everything on “machinery.” Mr. Baillie thought that the distress of the people was all owing to the invention of machinery, and except for that everybody would be prosperous and happy.

In this debate the Duke of Wellington, in the House of Lords, foreboded the ruin of agriculture. He “earnestly recommended their Lordships not to lend themselves to the destruction of our native cultivation. Its encouragement was of the utmost and deepest importance to all classes. He earnestly begged of them not to consent to any measure which would injure the cultivation of their own soil.” While the Duke of Wellington was talking so feebly as that in the House of Lords, Mr. O’Connell was talking thus wisely in the House of Commons. He said, “The present law is doubly iniquitous, as it raises prices and at the same time diminishes the vent for manufactures. He was weary of experiments on the poor. He heard of a man who complained that nothing could fatten his horse, although he had tried tobacco, and twenty other things. A friend asked him did you ever try oats? He wished the legislature would



try the people with bread. He would only agree to Lord John Russell's plan as an installment of justice, until he could get rid of Protection altogether." The Protective System of the United States performs the same double iniquity here that the English system did there forty-three years ago. It raises prices, and at the same time diminishes the vent for manufactures.

It was in the course of this debate that Mr. Cobden spoke for the first time in Parliament. He exposed the sufferings of the people to the gaze of the Senate, and charged against the Protective System the prostration of English industry. He lifted the question clear out of the realm of office-hunting intrigue, far above the wretched expedients of factionism and party. He placed it on the high plane of moral science, and gave notice to both Whigs and Tories that the question of the Corn-Laws must be met, and that a guilty responsibility should be laid on those who taxed the food of the people. He condensed the whole argument of the debate into a couple of sentences that fell upon Peel like the flash of light that smote Paul on the way to Damascus. One was this: Mr. Cobden contended that the Protective duty upon foreign grain was an unequal tax upon the subsistence of honest, struggling working people, and that it pressed upon them in an infinitely heavier proportion than upon the rich, for, said he, "the family of a man worth £20,000 a year, scarcely consumes more bread than the family of

the laborer." The injustice of the tax had never been shown so plainly in the House of Commons before. The comparison, although stated in few words, revealed at a glance how impossible it was for the poor man to evade the tax, for he must have bread for his family, while the family of the rich man could easily escape the tax by living on daintier food. Peel was a man of very large private fortune, and such illustrations disturbed him, for his sensibilities were kindly, and his instincts just. The other sentence was the startling proposition that the man who is not allowed to spend his wages to the best advantage is not free. Mr. Cobden said, "If it is criminal to steal a man and make him work for nothing, it was equally criminal to steal from a free man the fair reward of his labor." He disposed of the "cheap bread and low wages" doctrine by saying that the increase of trade which must follow from a repeal of the Corn-Laws would increase the demand for labor, and with that increased demand would come an increase of wages. There were some who sneered at this unpleasant person, but it is certain that the country gentlemen would have spent a more agreeable Christmas if he had not spoken at all.

When the debate ended, a division was had and there appeared to be, for the address 269, for the amendment 360, majority against the government 91. Then the Whigs resigned. They had been constitutionally kicked out as they had resolved to

be. Sir Robert Peel came into power with an obedient and well disciplined majority behind him, sufficient to carry every measure proposed by ministers. He formed a strong Cabinet including among its members Lord Stanley, Sir James Graham, and the Duke of Wellington, while in subordinate positions of importance were such men as Sidney Herbert, Lord Lincoln, and Mr. Gladstone.

In spite of all attempts to draw him out during the first session of the new Parliament, Sir Robert Peel refused to disclose the future policy of his government. He demanded time in which to form his plans. This was bitterly condemned by the Whigs, who insisted that he should propose his measures at once. October came, and still his plans were wrapped in mystery. Subsequent events convince us that he did not know them himself. Parliament adjourned until February, and he took the intervening months to consider what was best to do. His compact majority of ninety-one, rendered him quite independent of all minor factions within the party like those that had embarrassed the Whigs. Since the days of William Pitt, no Prime Minister had rested so absolutely secure on the support of such a well organized and coherent party.

Peel soon found that a statesman in power is a different personage from a politician on the opposition benches. In the latter case he has a jaunty time of it. Without any responsibility or care, he

can criticize the other side, and show his opponents what they ought to do. In the other case he carries on his shoulders the welfare of a people, and the burthen is heavy to a man ambitious of lasting fame, and who really wishes to do right. That Peel desired the welfare of his country is not to be denied, and when he began to reflect on the tremendous responsibility that had fallen upon him he saw that the tariff and the Corn-Laws in their present shape could not wisely or justly be maintained, and that some change was indispensable. Then he realized how weak and vain is the boasting of the strongest man. In the debate on the "want of confidence" resolution in May he had proudly enquired, "Who in this House has more steadily stood forward in defense of the existing Corn-Laws than I have done," and during the late canvass, he had said to the electors of Tamworth, "Who pay the highway rates? Who pay the church rates? Who pay the poor rates? Who pay the tithes? I say perhaps not altogether, but chiefly the landed occupiers of this country. If corn be the product of their land, and subject to these burdens, it surely would not be just to the land of this country which bears them all to admit it at a low rate of duty." "I have come to the conclusion that the existing system should not be altered, and that our aim ought to be to render ourselves independent of foreign supply;" the ready jargon which Protectionists have used in all countries, and in every age. His



boastings and his promises could not endure the strain of his new responsibility. His conscience told him that he must either resign office or amend the law. He resolved to amend the law.

During the recess the League was hard at work. The Free Trade agitation was extended to Ireland and Scotland. Newspapers were started, and vast numbers of pamphlets were distributed in every direction. Heaps of information concerning every trade and occupation in the Kingdom were piled up for use in the next Parliament. Meanwhile, there was great anxiety throughout the country as to the intentions of the Government. Cabinet meetings were held, but not a word leaked out as to their proceedings. The two or three speeches made by Cobden at the short session had sunk deep into the mind of Peel. The proof of it is clear. During the canvass in the summer he had declared that "the existing system should not be altered," in the winter he had changed his mind. In that interval he had heard Cobden.

A trifling incident which occurred just before the opening of Parliament alarmed the monopolists, and convinced the country that the League was actually making discord in the Tory Cabinet itself. The incident was this: The Toryist Tory in all England was the Duke of Buckingham, and he was in the Cabinet. With the blood of Henry Plantagenet in his veins, and the lordship of thousands of broad acres in his possession, he was a stately specimen of that haughty Norman aristoc-

racy which for nearly eight hundred years had held the Saxon in a state of serfdom, and his lands by right of conquest. So long as he was in the Cabinet it was certain that modern civilization would be excluded from its councils; that no such vulgar theme as "economics" would be debated at its meetings. So long as he was in the Cabinet monopoly might sleep in peace; the feudal system would stand firm, grim and defiant as the Tower of London itself. One morning it was whispered at the Carlton Club that the Duke of Buckingham had resigned, and the whisper was correct. Then the people knew that some changes in the Corn-Laws had been determined on. Inspired by the news the League worked harder than before.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE NEW TARIFF.

Condition of the Country at the Beginning of 1842—The Opening of Parliament—Sir Robert Peel's Plans—Criticism by Cobden—Dissatisfaction in the North—The Debate on the Government Proposals—Parallel Between the Arguments of Peel in 1842, and that of the American Protectionists in 1884—The Home Market—Mutual Protection—Lord John Russell's Amendment—Lord Palmerston's Argument—Cheap Food and Low Wages.

THE year 1842 opened gloomily. There was great distress throughout the country, and there was a deficit in the revenue of more than twelve million dollars. When Parliament met in February, there was great anxiety to know what the government intended to do. To the consternation of the monopolists, Sir Robert Peel announced that it was his intention to meet the deficit by the imposition of an income tax; that although he should maintain the "sliding scale," the duties on corn and provisions would be reduced. He also said that it was the intention of the government to revise the tariff, so as to deprive it of its prohibitory features, and to lower the duties on about seven hundred and fifty articles. This from a Protectionist Tory ministry was a great advance, and showed that small as was the number of Free Traders in the House of Commons,

the ideas of the League had actually affected the policy of the government.

The natural result of half-way measures followed. The government was assailed by both sides; by the Protectionists for yielding anything to the League, and by the Free Traders for not yielding more. Cobden was unsparing and fierce in his denunciations; immense meetings were held in the North, and in all the manufacturing country, at which resolutions were passed savagely condemning the ministry. At some of these meetings Sir Robert Peel was burned in effigy, a barbarous insult which deeply wounded him, and of which he rightfully complained. Cobden and the leaders of the League were not responsible for those excesses any further than all popular leaders are responsible for the mad acts of their followers who rush past them and out of their control. The Chartist agitation had produced a good deal of seditious talk, and some rioting. Ireland was discontented and miserable. In Peel's own language it was the "chief difficulty" of his government. Altogether there was immense responsibility upon the ministers, and the business of the country required for its safe management the highest qualities of statesmanship.

The debate of 1842 is a great event in the political history of England. For the first time in Parliament the revenue and economic system of the country was subjected to the test of scientific analysis, by minds trained not only in the schools,



but in trade, commerce, manufactures, agriculture, and in all the practical industries by which men earn their own living. In this debate the men whose living was earned by others were at a humiliating disadvantage. Norman nobles, whose fathers had fought at Hastings, and Agincourt, and Cressy, were laughed at for their ignorance by smoky people from Lancashire and Derby. Heretofore, debates of this character were the mere competition of class interests seeking to obtain the advantage of one another in the "Protective" legislation of the country. Now, the whole theory and practice of class legislation were placed on trial, with the entire people of England as an interested audience. That the true principles of political economy had been proclaimed in Parliament hundreds of times before the debate of 1842, is true, but they were given and accepted as abstractions only; and as they were conceded to have no practical bearing, they fell like good seed upon stony ground. They failed to obtain the notice of the people. It was not so now. The League had taken care to wake up the people, and compel them to listen to the debate.

In February, 1842, Parliament was opened by the Queen in person. She was then in the pride and bloom of young motherhood. She looked radiant and joyful, for her married life was happy. Additional grandeur was given to the occasion by the attendance of the King of Prussia, who had come over to attend the christening of the infant

Prince of Wales. Immense crowds lined the route of the procession, and they generously cheered the Queen. A cloud of anxiety passed over her face as she heard mingled with the acclamations of the people the ominous cries of "Cheap Labor," "Free Trade," "No Corn Laws." The first official knowledge obtained by the people that any change in the Corn-Laws had been resolved on by the government, was given in the following paragraph in the speech from the throne, "I recommend also to your consideration the state of the laws which affect the importation of corn." It was only last May that Lord John Russell had said those very words to the House of Commons, and for saying them the Whig ministry was overthrown in Parliament, and the Whig party defeated at the polls. The advance made in those few months was an accurate measure of the power of the League.

On the 9th of February, Sir Robert Peel moved that the House go into Committee of the whole to consider the duties on corn. He introduced his programme in a very ingenious and comprehensive speech; a speech that showed he was complete master of the subject, and familiar with all the details of England's commercial and industrial condition. He admitted the distress of the people, but he didn't believe that the Corn-Laws were responsible for it. He found reasons for it in all the corners of the earth, from China to America. He was weak enough to attribute some

of it to the displacement of hand-labor by steam power, to over-investment of borrowed capital, and to alarms of war; to everything, in fact, but the Corn-Laws. Still, he proposed some amendment to those laws. He thought that the "sliding scale" could be so amended that the price of wheat would not vary much from somewhere between fifty-four and fifty-eight shillings a quarter (about a dollar and seventy-five cents a bushel). He contended that the country should rely upon home production for its food supply, and should be willing to pay an extra price for it, because of the advantage of being "independent of foreign countries."

In the course of his argument Sir Robert said, "A comparison is made between the dearness of food in England and its cheapness in other countries; but that led to a fallacious conclusion. The true question is, not what is the price of bread? but what command the laboring classes have over bread? and what command they have over the enjoyments of life?" There was much truth in this, but it was stated so as to evade the conditions of Cobden's axiom that high prices resulting from prosperity might be permanent, because founded on public riches, whereas high prices resulting from scarcity must ever be precarious, because the resultant poverty rendered customers powerless to buy, thus dragging prices down often to the actual loss of the holders of the goods. A restricted market lowered wages by lessening the demand for goods, and low wages



restricted the command of the workingman over bread. Sir Robert Peel saw this afterwards, and acknowledged it; but he did not see it then, and the American economists do not see it yet. They still persist in raising prices by making scarcity, and they dread "a flood of cheap goods" as a calamity to be provided against by law. In the language of Mr. O'Connell, they persist by a restrictive policy in closing the "vent for manufactures;" gradually poverty steals over large numbers of the people, and at last there is a glut in the market, because customers are no longer able to buy. Up goes the cry of "over-production," and a "flood of cheap goods" is poured out of our own factories at the absolute loss of the men who have produced them. So precarious is American business under this bad system that a horde of people have grown up who actually make their living by speculating on its uncertainties, and the "operations" of our domestic commerce have largely degenerated into gambling.

Another parallel between the argument of Sir Robert Peel on that occasion, and the argument of the American Protectionists of our own day, is the boast that whatever comforts the people enjoy over those of other nations is due to the Protective System. He said that the people of England each consumed fifty pounds of meat annually, sugar seventeen pounds per head, wheat sixteen bushels each; and he easily showed that no other people on the Continent of Europe consumed so much of those



articles. Hence the Protective System increased the comforts of the people of England. It was difficult to answer this argument, because it was supported by tangible evidence, the meat and sugar and corn. As there was no Free Trade experience to contradict it, the refutation of it could be nothing better than a speculation and a hope. It was easy enough for the Free Traders to assert that under this system those comforts would be multiplied, but they had no proof of it, for their system had never been tried. They have the proof of it now. In 1842 Sir Robert Peel boasted that under the beneficent operation of the Protective System the English people were able to enjoy in one year the luxury of seventeen pounds of sugar each. In 1881, after thirty-five years' experiment of the Free Trade policy, the consumption of sugar in England amounted to fifty-eight pounds each for every man, woman, and child in the Kingdom. Other comforts were multiplied in the same proportion. The bountiful resources of the United States, which are able to defy the ill-treatment of the Protective System, are called up as witnesses by the American Protectionists in favor of that mischievous policy which is crippling them to the full extent of its power, as the same policy crippled for centuries the magnificent resources of Great Britain. A Free Trade policy would increase the comforts and prosperity of the people here as it did in England.

Although he was then making concessions to

the contrary principle, Sir Robert Peel maintained as the American economists do now that the "protection" of one class of the people at the expense of another is to the benefit of both. He said, "It is my firm belief that the total repeal of the Corn-Laws would aggravate the manufacturing distress, the prosperity of the two classes, agriculturists and manufacturers being identical." He maintained that the artificial prosperity conferred upon the agriculturists by the protective duties which excluded foreign grain, although apparently at first taken from the manufacturers, came back to them again in the creation of a home market for their goods, which the farmers were thus enabled to buy. So the protective stimulus given to manufactures performed a return miracle in creating a "home market" for grain. This doctrine is vigorously asserted in the United States to-day. A similar juggle is performed by Bulwer in one of his novels. A great landlord is making a speech to his tenantry, and boasting of the generous manner in which he spends the rents which he takes from them every quarter-day. He builds here and he improves there; he gives them employment at this place, and their sons good wages over yonder; he buys this of them, and that; he entertains great company up at the hall, and scatters money about like a king. He concludes by saying, "So you see that what I take from you with one hand I bestow upon you again with the other." Those dull farmers cannot

see the fallacy in this boasting; they cannot see that all this liberal squandering comes out of their own hard labor, so they give the enterprising landlord three rousing cheers and go home. In this fashion a thousand industries in the United States engage in the "Protection" pastime of merry-go-round, protecting everybody at everybody's expense, always getting back to the place whence we started, with much loss from friction and wasted power. Every man in the game has made something off the rest, and all are happy in the delusion that nobody has lost anything, because each has given back to his neighbor with one hand that which he took from him with the other. No account is taken here of the unfortunates who are not allowed to have any part in the game.

According to the etiquette of Parliament, the duty of answering the Prime Minister fell upon the leader of the opposition, and Lord John Russell rose to perform that duty. He had very little to say. A Protectionist himself, he did not know how much of the ministerial plan he might dare to criticise, and no doubt he felt himself that night entirely overmatched by Peel. He stammered a few sentences in condemnation of the "sliding scale," and sat down. But there was a man there who was not afraid even of the accomplished minister. That man was Cobden. He denounced the plan of the government as quite insufficient and unsatisfactory, because it did not reach down and remove the real causes of the people's poverty.



That kind of argument, though severe, could be endured ; but when the orator out of his abundant knowledge showed that the Prime Minister was in error as to his facts, and in that way toppled over the stately frame work of his reasoning, the House of Commons recognized at once that the smoky country had sent a man to Parliament, who was so thoroughly informed as to the agricultural, the manufacturing, and the commercial condition of England, that not even Peel, the greatest debater there, could safely make a statement on insufficient evidence, or even venture an opinion on any doubtful testimony. Here was a man whose facts fell upon the minds of his hearers with the force of the blows delivered by the factory steam hammer. The oratory of the colleges retreated from a contest with the untutored eloquence of this new member who actually earned his own living. Sir Robert Peel, grand, impassive, cold, lost his ancient self-command under the oratory of Cobden, and allowed his face to betray the emotions that stirred his conscience and his intellect. Among other things Mr. Cobden said, "The present proposal is an insult to the sufferings of the people, but I have not expected anything better. I do not expect to gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles. This policy towards the people of England would end at no remote period in the utter destruction of every interest in the country."

Sir Robert Peel pleaded the statute of limitations in favor of the Protective System, just as the



American Protectionists do to-day. A long possession of unjust privileges had ripened into a good title. Replying to Mr. Roebuck who had called upon the government to establish their policy on broad and enlightened principles the Prime Minister said, "It's easy enough to say apply great principles, but I find that mighty interests have grown up under this present law, and in full dependence on its faith. If you disregard those pecuniary and social interests which have grown up under that protection which has long been continued by law, then a sense of injustice will be aroused that will redound against your scheme of improvement, however conformable it may be to rigid principles."

During the debate Lord John Russell introduced a resolution condemning the "sliding scale." This he offered as an amendment to Peel's motion to go into committee. In support of the amendment Lord Palmerston said, "Why should the agriculturists be secured against the contingencies of the season, when such insurance is not attempted in any other trade?" And speaking of the benefits of Free Trade, he said, "It is that man may be dependent upon man. It is that the exchange of commodities may be accompanied by the diffusion of knowledge—by the interchange of mutual benefits engendering mutual kind feelings—multiplying and confirming friendly relations. It is that commerce may freely go forth leading civilization with one hand and peace with the other, to render mankind happier, wiser, and better.

Sir, this is the dispensation of Providence, this is the decree of that power which created and disposed the universe. But in the face of it, with arrogant presumptuous folly the dealers in restrictive duties fly, fettering the inborn energies of man, and setting up their miserable legislation instead of the great standing laws of nature." This was the lofty eloquence of a politician out of office. For many years Lord Palmerston had been a Cabinet Minister, and had never once attempted to apply those beautiful principles. As a matter of fact he had voted two years before against allowing the Manchester petitioners to be heard at the bar of the House. And what is still more remarkable, he was not ready to reduce those lovely sentiments to practice even at the very moment he was uttering them. He was a Free Trader in theory only, but in practice he was a Protectionist still. His liberal sentiments were nothing more than parts of the Whig strategy of the time.

With the exception of his affected superstitious dread of "steam power" which was unworthy of him, it was noticed that Peel in his great speech had been careful not to insult the intelligence of his hearers by asserting the false and flippant maxims which formed then, as now, the stock in trade of the Protectionist party. He scorned to use the customary cant that high prices of the necessities of life made wages higher, and therefore were a benefit to the workingmen. He knew that his speech was going down to posterity, and he

preferred that it should not be disfigured by such fallacies. As *The Edinburgh Review* said at the time, he left the utterance of these absurdities to his subordinates. With what inward scorn he must have heard Sir Edward Knatchbull, a member of his own Cabinet, declare, amidst uproarious ridicule, that "The duty on corn should be calculated in such a manner as to return to the landed interest full security for their property, and for the station in the country which they had hitherto held." No matter how biting the hunger of the industrious poor might be, the price of bread must be kept so high that the idle, fox-hunting, horse-racing aristocracy might still riot in profligate extravagance.

The progress of this instructive debate proved how true it is that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread." "Peart and chipper" young statesmen on the Tory side hurled right in the face of Cobden Protectionist maxims that Peel would have been afraid to utter. One of the Prime Minister's young statesmen was the Marquis of Granby, a coming duke, who knew as much about political economy as the wooden effigy of his ancestor, the historic "Markis o' Granby," which swung from the sign post of the hospitable tavern at Dorking, once kept by Mr. Tony Weller. The Marquis told the House of Commons that the experience of all Europe shows that the certain consequence of making food cheap is to lower wages." Sir Francis Burdett, the father of Lady Burdett Coutts, a man

who for forty years had been a radical reformer and a revolutionist, who had once been committed to the Tower by the House of Commons, and who had joined the Tories in his old age, declared, that to the laboring classes the price of corn did not signify one straw." Lord Mahon and Mr. Stuart Wortley talked in the same strain, and even Mr. Gladstone fluently prattled about "the fallacy of cheap bread." No wonder that Mr. Cobden taunted the Tory members about their ignorance, declaring that no such ignorance could be found among any equal number of workingmen in the North of England. Notwithstanding all this, the winding up of the debate showed a very comfortable majority for the Tories of one hundred and twenty-three. The numbers were: For going into committee, 349; for Lord John Russell's amendment, 226.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE HORIZONTAL PLAN.

Friendly Difference Between Whigs and Tories—Mr. Villiers offers his Free Trade Resolutions—Debate Thereon—Cobden—Macaulay—Defeat of the Resolution—Debate on the New Tariff—Sir Robert Peel's Reduction—The "Horizontal" Plan—Raw Materials—Opposition of the "Interests"—Protests of Monopoly—Fears of American Invasion—Debate on the Bill in the House of Lords—Machinery—Adjournment of Parliament—Party Gains and Losses—Renewed Activity of the League.

SIR ROBERT PEEL soon found that this friendly difference between the Tories and the Whigs, as to which kind of tax-torment was the easier to bear, a fixed duty or a sliding scale, while it might be of grave importance as an office-holding question between rival bands of Protectionists, was of trifling consequence to the small but resolute fragment which had resolved that the torment should altogether cease. He found that he must now discuss the question with men of far greater debating power than the Whig party possessed, and that he must discuss it as a principle, not an abstract principle either, but as a practical principle bearing immediately and directly upon the welfare of all the men in England who lived by manual industry. Lord Beaconsfield, in his life of Lord George

Bentinck, truthfully describes the formidable enemy that now confronted Peel, where he says, "Inferior in numbers, but superior in influence from their powers of debate, and their external organization were the members of the confederation known as the Anti-Corn-Law League."

Peel had scarcely time to congratulate himself on his victory over Lord John Russell, when on the 18th of February he was called to a more serious conflict. On that evening Mr. Villiers moved his resolution that duties on grain should altogether cease. The House of Commons looked upon this as the Quixotic chivalry of a man who could not see that the question had been settled the other night in the defeat of Lord John Russell's amendment. But the question presented by Mr. Villiers was far broader than that presented by Lord John Russell, and it was not at all settled by Peel's recent victory over the Whigs. Like the slavery question in our own country, it was destined never to be settled until it was settled right.

The resolution was debated for five nights, and much of the argument was a repetition of what had been said before. The most effective speech was made by Cobden. He completely upset the "cheap bread and low wages" fallacy by an object lesson that every man could read, the actual price of bread and the state of wages then existing in the country. He contended that it was a complete delusion to suppose that the price of

food regulated the price of wages. The last three years had fully demonstrated the folly of this principle. Bread had not been so high for twenty years, while wages had suffered a greater decline than in any three years before. He also contended that the price of labor was cheaper in England than on the continent because of its superior quality. With earnest emphasis he said, "Are you prepared to carry out even-handed justice to the people? If not, your law will not stand, nay, your House itself, if based upon injustice will not stand."

It is not surprising that common men should waver on great questions like this, when the powerful mind of Thomas Babington Macaulay was swayed by Cobden to the side of Free Trade, and by Peel to the side of Protection. He saw on the side of justice a great principle that ought to be established, while on the side of charity he saw injury to the protected classes, and this persuaded him that it ought not to be established—now. He said that he wished a total repeal of duties, but objected to an immediate withdrawal of Protection. He would therefore decline to vote. Peel taunted him with cowardice, and called upon him to vote on one side or the other, but he adhered to his resolution, and did not vote. On the frivolous question as to the amount of duties and how they should be levied, the Whigs and Tories voted against each other; but when the principle of Protection was at stake, they voted on the same side.

Eighty-nine members followed Mr. Villiers into the lobby, and three hundred and ninety-two followed Peel; a majority for the government of 303, in a vote of 489 members, leaving 175 who did not vote at all; and most of those might as well be added to the government majority.

In the month of May there was a long debate on the New Tariff. This debate is a curiosity now. With that speculative wonder which moves us as we roam through the great national museums of Europe, and gaze on the mummies of old Egypt, we wander through the mazes of this debate, and look upon the mummified theories of "Protection." It is hard to realize that only one generation ago, English statesmen actually believed that by making everything scarce and dear the general prosperity was increased. It would be even laughable if the mischievous delusion had not emigrated to America, and taken possession of our statesmen here, to the serious injury of the country. The old superstition, now obsolete in England, still flourishes in the United States.

Sir Robert Peel introduced his New Tariff with many apologies to the Protectionists, and assurances that it would not hurt them very much. Like a mother giving medicine to her children, he told them it was good for them, and that if the taste was slightly unpleasant they would be all the better for it in the end. When the portly gentlemen of the "landed interest," complained that fat cattle and lean were to be admitted at the same fig-



ures, instead of being taxed according to their weight, the bland Sir Robert told them it was all the better for them, because, said he, English graziers can import lean cattle at a low rate of duty, and fatten them for market; and, as to fat cattle, they wouldn't be imported anyhow. They couldn't stand a sea voyage. "No fat ox," he said, "could stand a trip across the Bay of Biscay," and as for France, why, none would come from there, because France herself was importing cattle. He showed that none would come from Belgium, Holland, Germany or the Prussian League; and then with grim flattery he told them that the English beef was so much better than any other kind of beef, that it would always bring a higher price in the market. With one side of his mouth he was telling the hungry people that he was about to cheapen beef by letting foreign cattle in, and with the other, he was quieting the Protectionists with a lot of blarney, and the assurance, that, although he was about to open the gates, the lean cattle wouldn't come in, and the fat cattle couldn't.

Sir Robert Peel made his reductions of the tariff on the "horizontal" plan, the only scientific way in which they could be made at all. The exceptions were in the case of some new materials of manufactures, and these he put upon the free list. This plan was imitated by Mr. Morrison in our Congress last spring, and was made the theme of much sardonic ridicule by the Protectionists throughout the country. In defense of the "hor-

izontal " plan Sir Robert Peel said, " The Government has made its reduction on a great variety of articles, so as to give to almost every one of those classes which might suffer from some one or more of the reductions, a compensation upon others." This reason was wise in the experiment, and vindicated by the result. When Mr. Morrison offered the same reasons for a like policy, he was laughed at, but they will yet be justified here as they have been justified in Europe.

In removing the protective duty from raw materials, Sir Robert said that he did so to protect the mechanic and the manufacturer. Referring to the protective duty on timber, he said that it had greatly discouraged the industry of cabinet makers, and all workers in wood. He spoke the same way about the high protective duties on foreign ores. He reduced the duties on whale oils, he said, because they were cheaper in the United States than in England, and by reason of that cheapness the United States was successfully competing with England in foreign markets "in all manufactures extensively consuming this article." He reminded the House of Mr. Deacon Hume's dictum that "this country having plenty of untaxed iron, and untaxed coal, wanted only plenty of untaxed wood to give employment to her industries." The very echo of those words so applicable to our country, rung through the American Congress in 1884, only to be ridiculed and condemned. The cast off rags of "Protection " which Sir Robert Peel

threw away in 1842 and 1846 are proudly worn by our statesmen in Washington to-day. In the course of his remarks Sir Robert referred to the tenacity with which men clung to their own special privileges while generally sacrificing those of their neighbors to the common good. In the New Tariff the duty on herrings was reduced fifty per cent., and he read a letter to the House which he had received from a man who was engaged in the business of curing herrings. He said, "I am a Free Trader in every other respect, but with regard to herrings I caution you against the general ruin which you are about to inflict on those engaged in that branch of trade."

When Sir Robert sat down Mr. Hume congratulated the ministers on their conversion to the principles of Free Trade. This pleasantry was resented by Mr. Gladstone, who declared that no conversion had taken place, and that their opinions remained unchanged. As a discrimination was made in the New Tariff in favor of the British colonies, a great deal of alarm was manifested, lest the Americans should smuggle their bacon into England by the way of Canada, and thus obtain the benefit of the colonial tariff; but this was quieted by Mr. Gladstone who "did not think the proposed duty could facilitate fraud by the importation of American produce through the colonies." This alarm about American bacon was not because the revenue might be defrauded by it, but was entirely a Protectionist fear that its introduction

might make meat a little cheaper to the hungry people of England.

Notwithstanding the plausible persuasions of Sir Robert Peel, the Protectionist country gentlemen were not at all satisfied that lean cattle wouldn't come in, and fat cattle too. Mr. Miles, member for Somerset, actually took issue with the government, and moved an amendment to the effect that imported cattle should be taxed by weight. The amendment amounted to nothing, for Sir Robert had his party too well in hand, and they feared to break away from him. They were in such an irritable frame of mind that when Mr. Villiers attempted to speak to the amendment, they greeted him with impatient marks of displeasure, and much interruption. Mr. Hume received no better treatment.

Lord John Russell ridiculed the contrary arguments of Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Miles; one pretending that cattle wouldn't come in, and the other contending that they would, and not only that, but their coming would reduce the price of beef. He thought the argument of Mr. Miles against the bill was very strongly in its favor; while those of Mr. Gladstone and Sir Robert Peel in its favor were very much against it. He said, "If the alarm of Mr. Miles is well-founded that the measure will give us better beef at a cheaper rate, let us by all means adopt the proposition. What are we here for? Is it to prevent the people from having cheap food?"



Even potatoes had been shut out of the country by high protective duties. The New Tariff admitted them on payment of two pence per hundred weight from foreign countries, and one penny per hundred weight from British Colonies. It was contended that twelve pence per hundred weight, was little enough protection for the English potato grower, and that it was the highest patriotism to keep old England independent of foreign potatoes. Mr. Palmer gravely said that this was a question of very considerable importance to the agricultural interests of the country, because it "resolved itself into the consideration whether we should or should not be dependent on foreign supplies." Mr. Stuart Wortley, who had defeated Lord Morpeth for the West Riding of Yorkshire, expressed much nervousness on the potato question, because "he had been given to understand that potatoes might be imported from France and Holland at a very low rate." Mr. Gladstone pacified those timid persons with some soothing syrup to the effect that it was not likely that many potatoes would come in anyhow, even if the tariff should be taken from them altogether.

Every monopoly protested against the New Tariff. The mine owners of Cornwall protested against a reduction of the duties on metal ores, and the members from that county gave warning that if the deep mines of Cornwall were once abandoned they would never be worked again. Some other people protested against a reduction of

the duty on iron, because it was necessary that British iron should be protected against the "pauper" iron of Germany. Some persons owned a stone quarry on the Isle of Portland. They protested against a reduction of the tariff on building stone, and declared that such reduction would be the ruin of their "industry." Even the wretched Irish peasant claimed protection for his pig, and Mr. Smith O'Brien actually moved to increase the duty on swine from five shillings a head all round to four shillings a hundred weight. Every "interest" predicted ruin to the country if its particular monopoly should be disturbed. In this way nearly everything from steam engines to apples, and from fat cattle to lobsters, had to fight for a reduction of taxation, and Sir Robert Peel was solemnly warned a hundred times to be careful, or he would afflict the land with cheapness and abundance.

Among the curiosities of this debate was the statement of Peel, that he couldn't conceive any possibility of "danger" from the importation of cattle from the banks of the Mississippi river. This was in answer to Major Vivian who wanted the duty on Canada cattle to be equal to that on cattle from other countries, because if it was not, he feared that cattle from the Western States would invade England by the way of Canada. That a Prime Minister of England should speak of the prospect of cheap cattle as "dangerous," proves that English statesmen in 1842, were as unenlightened as to the principles of political economy, and the true

ingredients of wealth, as our American statesmen are in 1884. Yet all through this debate Peel and Gladstone were soothing and wheedling a lot of parliamentary dunces with predictions that although they were reducing the import duties on several hundred articles, yet, for all that, there was not much "danger" that they would take advantage of it; that in fact, there was no danger that the country would be "flooded with cheap goods." After a weary journey of several weeks, through the committee of the whole house, the New Tariff bill passed the House of Commons, and was sent up to the Lords.

When the bill went up to the Lords it had to run the gauntlet of the same opposition it had met in the House of Commons. Lord Stanhope used an argument which has a familiar sound to us here in America. The reduction of duties, he said, would cause great distress among the industrial classes with whom the "foreigner" was put unfairly in competition. Free Trade, he said, could not be introduced into this country on account of the habits and prejudices of the people, but this bill would go far to introduce that system. Then he uttered the solemn prediction that "the measure would tend to the utter destruction of the country. The Duke of Richmond opposed the bill because it brought the English producer into competition with the "pauper" labor of foreign countries. Nevertheless the bill was allowed to pass.



The House of Lords being composed almost exclusively of great land owners and monopolists, it is not surprising that the principles of Free Trade were looked upon in that House as very low and vulgar, as revolutionary in fact, and destructive of that hoary feudal system on which the aristocracy of England rested. The noble peers regarded pheasants and peasants as alike made for their exclusive use and pleasure; and being a very ignorant set of people, they were easily thrown into panic whenever they thought their monopolies were threatened. They regarded the Anti-Corn-Law League as a monster more revolutionary and dreadful than even the steam engine, or the electric telegraph, or even an untaxed newspaper. On the 19th of April, 1842, Lord Brougham moved in the House of Peers that no tax should be levied upon corn, either for Protection or for revenue. It is not surprising that this motion was lost by 89 to 6. The wonder is where the six came from.

On the 8th of July, the state of the country being under discussion, Mr. Cobden censured Sir Robert Peel for affecting to believe that the prevailing distress was due to the introduction of machinery. He said, machinery does not throw people out of work if its perfection and introduction to practical use are gradual. He called upon Sir Robert Peel not to treat the subject with quibbles about machinery, nor as a mere Manchester question, but to look at it in connection with the whole



condition of the country—and it must be done this session.

Sir Robert made his escape on this occasion with great ingenuity and skill. Mr. Cobden was member for Stockport; and Sir Robert cited practical authorities from Stockport itself, showing by the evidence of one of the relieving officers of the Stockport Union, that the distress prevailing there was to be dated from the introduction of improved machinery into the mills, whereby a large number of hands was rendered unnecessary.

The same class of topics being under debate in the House of Lords, Lord Brougham labored to disprove what he considered one of the grossest fallacies that had ever been asserted, that the increase of machinery was the cause of the distress. He said also, that if the House did away with protective duties it would be impossible for other countries to maintain them. In this last opinion Lord Brougham made a serious mistake. The United States, Germany, Canada, Australia, and some other countries have not relaxed restrictive duties in accordance with Lord Brougham's prediction. On the contrary they have made them more onerous than ever. Not until they have all passed through the same costly experience that England underwent will they relax that unwise constriction which is strangling their industries and destroying their markets, as it strangled the industries and destroyed the markets of Great Britain.

In August Parliament adjourned, and people had time to foot up the accounts of the session, and strike a balance of party gains and losses. There was a difference of opinion as to the amount of profit and loss, but all agreed that whatever gains had been made must be placed to the credit of the Free Traders, and that the losses were all on the side of the Protectionists. The material gain to the Free Traders made by the reduction of duties in the New Tariff was trifling in comparison to the moral victory they had won in compelling the ministry to concede the principle of Free Trade. It was noticed that in all the debates the ministers had been careful not to defend Protection on its merits. They apologized for it and pleaded for it. They argued that great interests had grown up around it, that society had shaped itself to it, and that it could not be suddenly and violently overthrown without carrying in its fall the ruin of the protected classes, and shaking violently the business of the country; but they did not defend it as a correct principle of political economy.

Armed with this concession the League renewed its assault upon monopoly, and during the recess it was busy educating the people and creating a public opinion that should be more potent in the next session than it had ever been before. Great public meetings were held in all parts of the country, and Free Trade resolutions were adopted at all of them. On the 22d of November a very large

meeting was held at the town hall, Manchester, consisting of merchants, spinners, manufacturers, machine-makers, and other capitalists, and employers of workingmen in Lancashire and Cheshire, to consider the steps to be adopted in consequence of the ruinous effect produced on trade by the operation of the Corn-Laws, and the restrictive commercial policy. This meeting was called by the League, and it was resolved to raise \$250,000 for the work ; \$20,000 of it was put into the hat there and then. This was considered a great collection for one meeting, and yet before the work was ended \$300,000 was contributed at one meeting in that very same town to the funds of the League.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HARD TIMES.

Condition of the People in 1843—Riots in the North—John Bright—*Blackwood* Assails the League—Opening of Parliament—The Queen's Speech—Deficiency in the Revenue—Prostration of Business—Lord Howick's Resolution on the Manufacturing Distress—Debate Thereon—Mr. Gladstone Answers Lord Howick—Mr. Disraeli Defends the Corn-Laws—Cobden on the Landlords—His Personal Quarrel with Peel—Defeat of the Resolutions.

THE Protective System had reduced the people of England to a pitiful condition of poverty and immorality, a condition of debasement so squalid and obscene, that men born within the last forty-five years, not having seen it, can hardly believe it possible. In utter desperation the Chartists broke into rioting and tumult at Manchester, Preston, Blackburn, and nearly all the manufacturing towns. Great loss of life and property resulted from those riots. The police force was not able to subdue the rioters, and they were finally suppressed by the military power. The condition of England was one of great anxiety, not to say alarm. The influence of the League was thrown in favor of moral force agitation alone, but the Chartists contended that no reform was possible except through the agency of a violent revolution. The counsel of the League proved to be the wiser in the end.



It was about this time that John Bright began to be recognized as a power in the State. Although not yet in Parliament, his influence outside of it was almost as great as Cobden's inside. A massive Englishman was John Bright; a handsome man, strong of body and brain, one of the few great orators of modern England. His eloquence was pure, sparkling, strong. His invective burned like fire. He was more fluent and stately than Cobden, though no man could be more convincing. His voice was melodious, his magnetism great, and thousands of men crowded and jostled one another to get near him. They saw in him one of the great apostles of peace, a man whose politics were prompted and controlled by the most sublime religion. He subdued the mad passions and the vengeful turbulence of the hungry multitude, and in their stead he created a moral wisdom and a patient energy that gained the victory at last. Second to Cobden, and to Cobden alone, was John Bright in the great work of lifting the incubus of the protective tariff from the industries of Great Britain. He rendered great service between the close of the session of 1841 and the opening of the session of 1843.

During the fall and winter of 1842, notwithstanding the evidence of the riots, and the figures of the Poor Law Guardians, there were newspapers, magazines, and even statesmen, who insisted that the reports of public distress had been exaggerated by the emissaries of the League,

for the sake of political capital, and to create a popular sympathy and alarm that should operate on the government, and by a sort of moral duress compel the ministers to make concessions to an unwise and mischievous policy. *Blackwood's Magazine*, the most eminent literary journal in the Empire, declared in mockery of the people's hunger, that "For any real mischief which they can work, the present Corn-Laws are as quiescent as the laws of gravitation;" and the effort to relieve the people by the importation of foreign grain was described as "the wicked Corn-Law agitation." In one article by Christopher North himself, and to which he attached his name, the Free Traders were described as "the mischievous vermin of the Anti-Corn-Law League." Cobden, Bright, Villiers, and the other leaders of the movement he stigmatized as "ignorant and vulgar babblers," and he denounced "the systematic and mercenary wickedness of their intentions."

In spite of all efforts to conceal the sufferings of the people and to depreciate their extent, the aspect of public affairs at the opening of the year 1843 was of a dark and threatening character. The public mind was feverish with anxiety and alarm. The revenue figures appeared as witnesses, and they could neither be impeached nor brow-beaten out of court. They showed a serious falling off in the receipts from those articles the use of which gives evidence of prosperity. Parliament met on the 2d of February, 1843, and

then the ministers were compelled to give official recognition to the public distress in a speech from the throne. It contained these words:

“Her Majesty regrets the diminished receipts from some of the ordinary sources of revenue.”

“Her Majesty fears that it must be in part attributed to the reduced consumption of many articles, caused by that depression of the manufacturing industry of the country which has so long prevailed, and which Her Majesty has so deeply lamented.”

The Earl of Powis who was appointed by Sir Robert Peel to move the address in the House of Lords in answer to the speech from the throne, stepped very tenderly over that part of it which referred to the public distress. He skipped over it very much like a schoolboy skipping the hard words in a reading lesson. He lightly remarked, “We cannot conceal from ourselves the conviction that great masses of the population of this country in the course of the last year have been unable to avail themselves to the same extent as formerly, of those enjoyments which they usually possess.” He did not like to use so unpleasant a word as “starvation” in such lordly company, neither did the Earl of Eglinton who seconded the address. He trusted that the worst was over. He had that hopeful philosophy which believes that things will all come out right, and that most likely something will turn up. He hoped that “by the revival of trade and commerce

the sufferings of the people would be alleviated." There was a dull inconsistency in this hope, because the Earl of Eglinton and his party were at that very moment bent on preserving a protective tariff for the very purpose of restricting "trade" and preventing "commerce." In the House of Commons the mover and seconder of the address talked very much like their colleagues in the House of Lords. The criticisms of the opposition were feeble and rather apologetic as if the Whigs felt themselves to some extent guilty of the surrounding misery. Lord John Russell, however, made an irresistible point against Peel when he twitted him with having reduced his supporters to this difficulty, "that they were obliged to vindicate the tariff on principles of Free Trade, and the Corn-Laws on principles of Protection."

A wild-eyed Yorkshireman, Mr. Ferrand, member for Knaresborough, declared that there would be no protection for the poor unless machinery was taxed sufficiently to restrain its use and activity within such bounds as would prevent its competition with hand-labor. This crazy statesmanship excited laughter from all sides of the House, and yet it was in logical harmony with the Protective System. Importation produced abundance, which it was the intent and purpose of a protective taxation to restrain. Machinery created abundance, and why should not that also be restricted by the device of taxation? Besides, had not Sir Robert Peel himself, in his debate



with Cobden in July, ascribed the distress of the country, in part, to the competition of machinery? and had he not proved it, too, by the official statements of the guardians of the poor in Mr. Cobden's own borough of Stockport? Why, then, should the statesmanship of Mr. Ferrand be laughed at, and that of Sir Robert Peel admired?

On the 18th of February, 1843, Lord Howick moved that the House resolve itself into committee of the whole to consider the distress of the country; and thereupon arose one of the most instructive debates that ever took place in Parliament. Lord Howick contended that the protective tariff had crippled the agricultural, mining, manufacturing, and the shipping interests of the country, and he argued that the Corn-Laws ought to be repealed. He said that the distress was largely caused by laws which went directly to the restriction of importation. This restriction was not an incident arising from taxation for revenue purposes, but it was intentionally created in order to check importation from foreign countries. He insisted that increased importation would stimulate and encourage domestic industry instead of aiding to depress it. This assertion was rather a speculation and a theory in England at the time Lord Howick made it, but experience has established the truth of it as firmly as any proposition in Euclid is established by demonstration. "If you tell me," said Lord Howick, "that my argument is only a theory, what is yours?"

Your whole system of restriction is built on a theory which cannot be defended now, a theory which took its rise in the notion that gold and silver constituted wealth—that all that a nation gained by trade went to increase the amount of its gold and silver, and that to increase its exports and to decrease its imports, in order to leave a favorable balance of trade, was a wise policy.”

We can hardly conceive that the present Prime Minister of England, the great leader of the Liberal party, was that night the Tory champion, whose duty it became to answer Lord Howick. Mr. Gladstone admitted the distress of the country, although he thought Lord Howick had exaggerated it. He conceded much of the argument of his adversary, but resisted the motion on the ground of expediency. It was not the time to repeal the Corn-Law. The measures of last session had not had a fair trial. They ought to see what other nations would do to reciprocate a reduction of duties. England could not be expected to open her ports while she had hostile foreign tariffs to contend against, and so on. Never once did he contend that the Protective System was sound, either in morals or as a system of social science. His speech was an excuse for Protection, not a defense of it, except, perhaps, where he sought to make a distinction between Protection to agriculture, and Protection to other interests. No commercial law, he said, could be permanent, but that of Protection to agriculture

was so, and he was not prepared to abandon it so long as Protection was given to any other interest. He further said that Lord Howick might have spared himself the trouble of advancing abstract principles when the real question was one of time and degree. He wound up with the usual flip-pant formula that the motion was fraught with disaster to every interest in the country. It is still the religious belief of every Protectionist that if you assail his monopoly you threaten disaster to every other interest in the country.

The Protectionist principle that the end of all true political economy is to promote scarcity, found outspoken champions in this debate. Mr. Ferrand contended that the distress of the country was all owing to machinery, and that if machinery could be done away with, the conveniences of life would become scarcer, and this would create a demand for labor, the people would all get employment at good wages, and prosperity would be the result. He therefore moved the following amendment to the motion of Lord Howick, "and also to inquire into the effects of machinery upon the moral and physical condition of the working classes." He advocated returning "to the principles of our forefathers," as opposed to Free Trade, which new-fangled heresy was destroying the interests of the working classes. Mr. Ferrand was not alone in his opinions, for Mr. Liddell thought that Lord Howick's plan of opening up new markets would do no good, because such was

“the tremendous power of machinery in England that they would soon be overstocked as well as the old.” Mr. Ward apologized for machinery on the curious ground that it was necessary in order for the English to compete with the cheaper labor, and more fertile soil of other countries. He thought that the Americans had made a mistake in their high protective tariff of 1842, but contended that the English had provoked it by fixing such a high duty on American grain. The most bewildering doctrine that this remarkable debate produced came from Mr. Muntz, member for the important town of Birmingham, who contended that the present condition of things was unnatural, and that “we must either repeal the Corn-Laws or *lower the price of silver*.” No wonder the common people should have such crude notions on the science of political economy, when the statesmen of the country could talk as they did in this debate.

Mr. Disraeli took part in the debate. He was then an ambitious young man with a consciousness that he possessed talent which ought to bring substantial reward in a political market, when talent was so much in demand. He was literally a Parliamentary adventurer “seeking his fortune.” He had started in politics a violent Radical, but soon discovered, in the slang of the Americans, that such nonsense as that “wouldn’t pay.” He therefore joined the Tory party, which to say the least of it, was always generous in the apprecia-



tion of talent. He had written two or three trashy novels which had given him a footing in the literary guild. He was flattered when people pointed him out at Lady Blessington's, and said, "That's young Disraeli, the man who wrote Vivian Grey;" but he shrewdly saw that this perfume was fleeting and unsubstantial, and that if he was ever to win advancement and make a record in this world he must do so in the House of Commons. He failed at first, not because there was not merit in what he said, but because it was all covered over, like his waistcoat, with cheap jewelry and tinsel. That sort of thing may do very well for some places, but the House of Commons "won't have it, you know," and he was chaffed and ridiculed. He diligently sought Peel's patronage by tenders of loyal service, but Peel, to the day of his death, could never see anything in him, and he refused to employ him. He probably regarded him as an Asiatic exotic that could never be developed into an English statesman. This was bad for Peel, because Disraeli afterwards took revenge in a shower of poisoned arrows that gave pain to the great minister in the hour of his fall. Besides, Peel's judgment of him was erroneous, because, although to the last there was much of the gaudy and theatrical about Disraeli, there were beneath the frippery the solid qualities of statesmanship, nor was it of the Asiatic kind, but of that practical, fighting, acquiring, conquering, Rule Britannia sort, peculiarly

English. Peel never dreamed that this young politician whose services he would not have at any price, was destined to be an Earl, a Knight of the Garter, and Prime Minister of England.

Mr. Disraeli opposed the motion and contended that much of the distress was to be attributed to the fact that treaties of commerce had not been carried out with France, Brazil, and other countries, which countries were consequently closed against the manufactures of England. He improved the occasion to offer himself unconditionally to the Tory aristocracy. He had the daring to declare that "he thought the present Corn-Law not injurious to commerce, while it maintained as it ought to do the preponderating influence of the landed interest." He then went off into rhetorical hysterics about "the Doge of Venice, who when looking out on the Lagunes, covered with the ships engaged in the trade of the Levant, said that, 'notwithstanding all he saw, Venice, without its *terra firma*, would be like an eagle with one wing.' So should he say of England, and he should not therefore consent to destroy the preponderating influence of the landed proprietary of the country." The eastern adornment on all this went for nothing. The "landed proprietary" knew little and cared less about the Doge of Venice and his Lagunes, but Mr. Disraeli's bid for employment was taken into consideration and in due time it was accepted.

Mr. Villiers made an argument so strong in common sense, and so sarcastic in its application that it created much nervousness and irritation on the Tory benches. He said that Mr. Gladstone had vindicated the restrictive principle of the Corn-Laws, because it had always been the rule in legislation to treat corn in a peculiar way. "Of course that has been the rule," said Mr. Villiers, "and why? Because the legislation of the country has always been under the control of the landed aristocracy." Legislators who had great interests of their own to serve would always be found passing laws to protect and advance those interests. Mr. Villiers said, "There have been twenty-five Corn-Laws since 1765. Yes, and in five hundred years there have been forty." He then threw ridicule upon the whole Protective System by a couple of illustrations drawn from the records of Parliament. Less than a century ago, he said, a petition was presented by one county against another; the former had always grown beans, and wished to retain the monopoly. It wanted "Protection" against the competition of the neighbor county which had lately set itself up as a rival in the bean-raising industry. The other illustration was the petition of the county of Middlesex against the making of good roads, because thereby the farmers of that county would lose the monopoly of the London Market. Mr. Villiers contended that the argument to preclude one county from competing with another was

precisely the same as the argument to preclude one country from competition with another, and that the principle and the result were alike in both cases. The answer to this was the statement of Lord Sandon that the ancient policy must be continued in order to protect the "home market," as if that were not the very criminal then on trial; as if the experiment of centuries had not shown that the restrictive system had crippled and weakened not only the home market, but the foreign market also.

Mr. Cobden, with his usual earnestness went straight and fearless right to the merits of the question, as affecting not only the manufacturers, but all the people in the land. "My chief objection to the motion," he said, "is that it does not include agricultural as well as manufacturing distress." This point, however, should have been made, not against Lord Howick's motion, but against that paragraph in the royal speech on which the motion was founded. In the speech from the throne the ministers had been careful to say nothing about *agricultural* distress. To have done so would have been to condemn the Corn-Laws. They were maintained as a special "Protection" to the agricultural classes, and an admission that they had failed to do so would have embarrassed the ministers in the subsequent debates. Cobden would not allow them to evade the question in that way, and to the serious annoyance of the "landed proprietary" he dragged the



agricultural laborer into the debate. He showed the wretchedness of his condition, and contended that even the tenant farmers themselves were suffering loss and privation by reason of the Corn-Laws. All this was very irritating to the "landed proprietary," because they knew that it was true; but it was endurable and even pleasant in comparison with what followed.

Mr. Cobden in a few fierce thrusts that could not be parried gave a mortal wound to the false pretense of the landlord classes that they constituted the "landed interest" of the country. He showed that on the contrary they were its blight and plague. For centuries the landlords had masqueraded as "agriculturists," the "landed interest," the great "stock-breeders," the "model farmers," and the like, when, in fact, with few exceptions, they were simply a tax upon the landed industry of the country. The delusion was kept up at cattle shows and fairs, where Dukes and Earls in farmer looking broad-brimmed hats and top boots, would walk about chewing straw, and discussing sheep and turnips with the yeomanry. As a rule the English landlord had no higher claims than a cut-worm to be called an agriculturist. Cobden tore away the mask and revealed the hypocrisy of the claim. He declared that the landlord had no right to class himself with the farmers of the land. He might live all his days in Paris or in London. "The landlord," said Cobden, "is no more an agriculturist than a ship-

owner is a sailor." Then turning to Peel, he said, "You have reduced the tariff on seven hundred articles, but you have omitted the two that can give material relief to the people, corn and sugar."

The conclusion of this speech, though vigorous, proved very unfortunate. Mr. Cobden declared that he held the Prime Minister "individually responsible" for the distress of the country, and this expression, which he had used several times lately in the north, he repeated with strong emphasis. Sir Robert Peel rose in a state of nervous excitement, quite unusual with him, and resented this personal attack. His private secretary, Mr. Drummond, had been assassinated a few days before, in mistake for him, and the tragedy had shocked him greatly. He referred to several attacks of this kind which the honorable member had lately made upon him elsewhere. He accused Mr. Cobden of pointing him out for assassination, and the sympathy of the House was with Peel. In vain Mr. Cobden tried to explain that a wrong interpretation had been put upon his words, and that he only alluded to the right honorable baronet in his official capacity as the head of the government. The House refused to hear him.

This incident was an unhappy one, for it placed those great men in the attitude of personal enemies for two years, a position which caused Cobden to be unjust to Peel on more than one occasion. In contrast it must be said the treatment of Cobden by Peel was magnanimous. The

suspicion of a motive so abhorrent to his gentle nature wounded Cobden so keenly that it seemed almost impossible to forgive the man, who, even in the excitement of a great debate could impute it to him. Three years afterwards Peel publicly acknowledged in his place in Parliament that in this personal conflict he himself was in the wrong. It was in the opinion of many that although the Free Traders had the best of the argument, this advantage was thrown away by Cobden's indiscreet attack upon the Prime Minister. It is not likely that it affected any votes either one way or the other. The division showed a majority for the Minister of 115. The numbers were, for Lord Howick's motion, 191 ; against the motion, 306.

## CHAPTER VII.

### AMERICAN WHEAT AND THE DRAIN OF GOLD.

The Peculiar Burdens upon Land—Sir Robert Peel will Maintain the Existing Law—Threatened with American Wheat—Debate on the Annual Resolutions of Mr. Villiers—Mr. Gladstone and the “Drain of Gold”—Sir Edward Knatchbull’s Blunder—This Debate and that on the Morrison Bill—Mr. Muntz on the “Drain of Gold”—Reciprocity—Mr. Tyler’s Promise to Reciprocate—Defeat of the Resolutions.

It had long been the claim of the “landed proprietary” that the Protective System was only a just compensation in return for the “peculiar burdens” thrown upon the land by the poor rates, the highway rates, the church rates, and all other sort of “rates” that fell exclusively upon the land. A great many people knew that this claim was largely fictitious, but as the “great parties” were both interested in advancing it, there was no serious contradiction of it so long as the “burning issues of the hour” consisted chiefly in a fight for the offices between the Whigs and the Tories. But a new element was now in Parliament caring for neither Whigs nor Tories, and it proposed to test this claim. On the 14th of March Mr. Ward, member for Sheffield, moved for a special committee to enquire whether there are any peculiar bur-



dens specially affecting the landed interest of this country, or any peculiar exemptions enjoyed by that interest. Should the committee be granted Mr. Ward agreed to show not only that the claim was unfounded, but also that the power of the landlords had been systematically employed to relieve themselves from taxation, and that a combination existed amongst them dangerous to the other interests of the country.

Instead of granting the committee, or answering Mr. Ward, the Protectionists attacked the Anti-Corn-Law League; and Mr. Bankes moved as an amendment to Mr. Ward's motion, "that the attention of the House should be directed to certain associations dangerous to the public peace, and inconsistent with the spirit of the constitution." Mr. Cochrane in seconding the amendment thought that the House was indebted to Mr. Bankes for directing its attention to the dangerous and treasonable proceedings of the League. He charged the League with sending emissaries and spies into the country to disturb the peace and comfort of the peasantry; which is curiously like the accusations that used to be charged by the Slave Lords in this country against the Abolitionists.

Sir Robert Peel opposed the motion, and insisted that the "peculiar burdens" on the land were great. He promised that at some future time returns of these burdens should be laid before Parliament. As the nervous system of the "landed proprietary" was just then in a fevered condition resulting from

anxiety as to Peel's intentions, a soothing influence was felt when the Prime Minister declared that if he were convinced that it was for the interest of the country at large that the Corn-Laws should be altered, he would not one moment hesitate to alter them; but he was not so convinced. There was great cheering when he said that as the continuance of doubt as to the intentions of the government must have a tendency to unsettle business, he felt bound to say that it was his intention to maintain the present law.

When the cheering caused by this announcement had subsided, Mr. Blackstone congratulated the House and the country on the declaration just made by Sir Robert Peel. It would give universal satisfaction, and put an end to the hopes that existed in some quarters of being able to tamper with the law. He trusted, also, that the threat of importing American grain at a nominal duty through Canada would not again be heard of. The promise of an angry nation to fire shot and shell into the ports of its rival may fairly be described as a "threat," but only the perverted and inverted logic of a Protectionist could make a "threat" out of the promise of one great nation to fire sacks of grain among the hungry people of another. "I was ruined," said the little cobbler in the Fleet prison, to Sam Weller, "I was ruined by having money left me." So, in the jargon of monopoly, England was "threatened" with ruin by the cheap grain of America, and to-day America is threat-

ened with ruin by a "flood of cheap goods from England." Our statesmen tell us that we need an armor-plated navy, and guns that can shoot like earthquakes, for England our enemy has a great artillery loaded to the muzzle, ready to fire into us blankets, and clothes, and rails, and wire, and a hundred other bombshells of equal mischief. Another foe wants to fire sugar at us, and another leather, and another wool. Let us cover the seas with war ships and defy their "threats." Let us make the great ocean a lake of burning fluid if necessary to "protect" our people from the missiles of enlightenment and peace. Mr. Ward's motion was defeated without an effort by a majority of ninety-nine.

In May, 1843, Mr. Villiers brought forward his annual motion to go into committee of the whole "to consider the import duties on foreign grain, with a view to their immediate and total abolition." The debate on this motion was, if possible, more remarkable in its display of statesman-like ignorance than the other, but unlike the other, it was not all on the side of the Protectionists. Even Mr. Villiers himself showed a forgetfulness of his geography when he said, "The use of wheaten bread is denied to ten millions of people in the British islands, while a plague had arisen in Louisiana, because the produce was left to rot upon the ground for want of a market." He evidently had a confused idea of where Louisiana was, or what was the nature of her products. That wheat rotting on



the ground should produce a plague was a phenomenon peculiar to the State of Louisiana. Perhaps Mr. Villiers referred to the vast territory formerly known as Louisiana, and if he spoke prophetically he was not so very far wrong. Probably his remark was merely an exaggerated word painting of the folly of one people "protecting" themselves from sharing in the superabundant wealth of another. He worried the House with some uncomfortable facts. He asserted that ten millions of the people could not afford to indulge in the luxury of wheaten bread, that a large portion of the Irish lived on potatoes, and that the people of Scotland lived on oatmeal. He also showed that in England great numbers of the people were limited to a supply not exceeding fourteen ounces a day, and many had not half that quantity.

Once more it became the duty of Mr. Gladstone to answer the Free Traders, and he contented himself with leaving them unanswered. In fact there was but one way to answer Mr. Villiers, and that was by contradicting him, and showing that his statements were erroneous. This, Mr. Gladstone did not dare to do, for he knew that the figures were correct. He did not deny either the facts or the conclusions. He admitted the distress of the people, but contended that they were better off than they were two hundred years ago, which was an unsubstantial sort of comfort, and hardly satisfactory. He met the motion by an emphatic negative, and declared that the government would



not consent to any further modification of the Protective System. He said that last year the House had rejected the motion by three hundred and ninety-three to ninety, but if the motion was unreasonable twelve months ago it was doubly so now. He then condescended to use the false pretense that is so glibly maintained in the United States to-day, namely, that a commercial law such as a Tariff for the Protection of certain trades is in the nature of a "contract" between the government and the protected interests. This doctrine would perpetuate extortion by converting a law for raising revenue to support the government, into a contract with certain parties that it should remain upon the statute books for the purpose of raising revenue for them. He maintained that the tariff of last year was a "contract" with the protected classes that could not be violated. History repeats itself, and we are told in America in the year 1884, that the clumsy juggle known as the Tariff of 1883, is a contract with monopoly, that shall not be further disturbed. "What the country needs," exclaimed Peel and Gladstone, "is rest from tariff agitation." "What the country needs," remark the millocrats and tariff statesmen of America, is "rest from tariff agitation."

Mr. Gladstone was not yet free from the ancient superstition about the "drain of gold," and its debilitating effect upon any country that suffers from it. He still believed that wealth consisted in gold and silver, but not in corn and cotton and

wool. He thought that a gold sovereign was riches, but that a hide of leather was not. He still believed that it was the duty of government to make the streams of commerce and trade run up hill and not down, and that it should waste its energies for ever in watching the "balance of trade," and guarding against the exportation of silver and gold. Wiser it was to drain the lives of the people by hunger than to drain the gold from the country by purchasing flour in New York. With the air of a minister announcing the loss of a battle, Mr. Gladstone informed the House of Commons that already since the beginning of the year, three million pounds had been sent to America in payment for the products of that country, and there was a gloomy prospect of still further disaster impending over the nation because "wheat was so cheap in the Mississippi valley, that if a protective tax upon its importation should be abolished vast quantities of it would be poured upon England." Even a heart of pig-iron might be softened into compassionate putty at the prospect of such calamitous abundance. As the measures of last year had not yet had a fair trial, Mr. Gladstone concluded that the government would be unworthy of the confidence of the country should it agree to the motion of Mr. Villiers.

Mr. Roebuck supported the motion, but scolded the League. He ridiculed Gladstone's alarm about the "drain of gold," which he called an idle and groundless fear. He also said that in 1815, the

landlords consulted their own interests by keeping up high prices and high rents by means of a law prohibiting the importation of foreign corn. This was the reason for establishing the monopoly, and it was hypocrisy to deny it. Lord Howick also supported the motion, although he declared himself in favor of a small fixed duty as a compromise between conflicting parties. At the same time he was emphatic in declaring his belief that "Protection" of every kind was a robbery of the community.

With a frank blundering honesty that amused everybody, Sir Edward Knatchbull described some of the "peculiar burdens" laid upon the land, and which ought to be considered. Among these he reckoned the duty of "making provisions for younger children," and so long as that duty remained, of course "Free Trade was quite impracticable." The elder children of the landed aristocracy being provided for by the law of primogeniture, their younger children should be provided for by that furtive system of taxation known as "Protection to home industry." It never occurred to Sir Edward Knatchbull that it was the duty of land-owners to support their own younger children as other people had to do; nor did he conceive it possible that society in England could ever degenerate so low as to require those younger children to earn their own living. The mediæval sentiment that a gentleman must not work, nor engage in trade or in manufacturing still prevailed in Brit-



ain. He might belong to the "professions," but not to the trades. A millionaire tradesman was not eligible to membership in any club in London, while his brother, a penniless lawyer, would be welcomed at them all. Sir Edward Knatchbull was not an ignorant old fox-hunter, like many of his order. He ranked as a statesman, and was in fact a cabinet minister at this time. Lord John Russell made great sport of Sir Edward Knatchbull's admission of the Tory object of tariff taxation. At the same time he declared himself a Protectionist, and in favor of a fixed duty. He must therefore oppose the motion.

The debate in Congress on the Morrison bill of 1884, is nearly a transcript of the debate in the House of Commons on Mr. Villiers' motion offered in 1843, proving that principles vary not with latitude, and that the selfish instincts are the same in every land. Commerce demanded freedom for the same reasons in both debates, and monopoly defended itself by the same arguments. Those who have read the debate of 1884, will see the parallel. In the House of Commons Mr. Ewart exposed the fallacy that high prices made high wages. He maintained that an extension of the commerce of the country enabled people to consume more largely, and this would increase business and wages too. Other members took the opposite ground, and maintained that the English farmer and mechanic and laborer were entitled to a Protection at least equal to the difference in the



rate of wages between England and the nations of the continent. Mr. Scrope admitted that all indirect taxes on consumption gave incidental Protection, but that considering the greatness of the public debt and the enormous expenses of the government, we could not repeal those taxes, and therefore Free Trade was impracticable. He thought, however, that the tariff should gradually be adapted to the principle of "revenue only." Col. Wood asserted that the Corn-Laws were mutually beneficial to manufacturer and agriculturist, and he claimed that the Protectionists were actuated by no other motives than the good of the whole community. Sir Howard Douglass considered a repeal of the Corn-Laws fatal to the best interests of the Empire, commercial, manufacturing, and agricultural. Compelling the people to buy of one another by the scheme of Protective taxation was the highest wisdom, because it gave us the "home market." With clap-trap ostentation worthy of our Congress he exclaimed, "England is the best customer of England," and he said that by giving direct Protection to one industry, you indirectly give Protection to some other. Sir Howard Douglass traveled in a circle like the lost man on a prairie, a mode of progression very popular just now with Protectionists in the American Congress, and in every other Congress too, for that matter. He was well answered by Mr. Muntz who supported the motion for the very reason that the Corn-Laws and the tariff had been so arranged that they protected

some classes and not others. He declared that labor was not protected at all. If there was to be any protection, he said, the poor should have the benefit of it, but he contended that the leaning of Protection was always in favor of the rich. He seemed to labor under a dreamy delusion that the Protective System might be arranged "according to the principles of Christianity," in favor of the poor and against the rich, a miracle it is needless to say, that never has been and never will be achieved. Mr. Muntz declared that the protected classes received so many millions more for what they sold than they would get if the people were allowed to buy in a free market, and he admitted the claim of Mr. Gladstone that this prevented a "drain of gold;" he admitted that this money was not lost to the country, but remained in it. "But," said Mr. Muntz, "I'll tell you where the money does go, although it stays in the country. It goes out of the pockets of industry into the pockets of idleness." He thought, however, like some of our American statesmen, that it was useless to reform the Tariff until the "currency" was properly fixed. Mr. Milner Gibson contended in opposition to Sir Howard Douglass that it was certain the Protective System injured commerce and manufactures, while it was not at all certain that it benefited agriculture. Mr. Gibson afterwards became one of the great leaders of the Free Trade revolution, and his words in this debate had peculiar weight, because he did not belong to the "Manchester class." He

was not in trade, but was himself a Suffolk land-owner.

In this debate the wisdom of biting off your nose to spite your face was maintained by some ignorant statesmen who knew no better, and by some intelligent statesmen like Mr. Gladstone, who did know better. It was contended that if foreign countries would not open their ports to British manufactures, England should close her ports against their wheat and bacon. That the English people were suffering for want of food made no difference. They should maintain "reciprocity," even at the price of starvation.

The "reciprocity" theory did good service to the ministers in this debate. Whether or not they believed in it themselves is doubtful; perhaps some of them did. It is quite evident that a large majority of the House of Commons had not yet learned that it is a good thing to buy in the cheapest market, even if you cannot sell in the dearest, and so they kept ringing the changes on "reciprocity." Mr. Christopher maintained that to adopt Free Trade without any guarantee of "reciprocity" from foreign countries would be useless to the manufacturers, and ruinous to the agriculturists.

One ardent member, Mr. Thornley, had become so zealously interested in the "reciprocity" plan, that he just stepped over to America to have a talk with the President of the United States about it. It is a mortifying fact that the President filled him full of lies and false promises,



and then sent him home again. Mr. Thornley told the House that if the English would adopt Free Trade, the Americans would immediately do the same; that Mr. Tyler told him so. Mr. Tyler also told him that the only obstacle to an extended trade between the two countries was the English Corn-Law. All that was necessary to establish "reciprocity," was for the English to begin.

Mr. Cobden said, "The law inflicts scarcity upon the people or it does nothing; and the condition of the agricultural laborer is the severest condemnation of the law." He turned Sir Edward Knatchbull's unlucky argument against him, and all the landlord class. He said, "If the object of the law is to make provision for the younger sons of the aristocracy, and effect marriage settlements for their daughters, what benefit does the farmer derive from that?" He declared that the only way to raise the price of corn was by making it scarce, and that this was the object of the law. He declared that no party had the right to make the food of the people scarce. To ordinary minds these propositions appear to be self-evident, and yet there was a great party in England that denied them and maintained that the food of the people ought to be made dear in order to protect the farmer against the cheaper labor, the richer soil, and the finer climate of other lands. Unhappily, this party controlled the House of Commons, as the division showed, for the Free Traders were beaten by the



frightful majority of three hundred and eighty-one to one hundred and twenty-five.

In the month of June the subject came up again in a discussion as to the relative merits of Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Lord John Russell moved to go into committee to take into consideration the laws relating to the importation of foreign grain. As he was at that time a Protectionist himself, and differed with Peel only in preferring a fixed duty to the "sliding scale," his motion had no practical value whatever, except to keep debate alive, and on this ground Mr Villiers declared that he should support it. It gave an opportunity for a repetition of the old arguments against the Corn-Laws, and Mr. Gladstone answered them again as before. That the Whig doctrine of Protection differed little from the Tory doctrine was curiously shown by the speech of Lord John Russell. He exhibited the same dread of abundance that Mr. Gladstone had shown a few weeks before. Under the working of the sliding scale, he said, that just prior to the harvest, when the farmer was in anticipation of a good price for his produce, "the deluge of foreign corn was poured in," and he found himself disappointed. "The blame of these inundations of corn was attributable to reckless speculators, but speculators, he trusted, there would always be; and if they were sometimes reckless it was the law that made them so." Let not the American reformers be discouraged at the ignorance of political economy

displayed by their own statesmen. Let them reflect that Lord John Russell when he talked in that benighted way was a mature statesman fifty-one years old, the leader of a great party, and a future Prime Minister of England. Yet he had an economic use for speculators in grain; he spoke of a "deluge of corn" as if it were some new disastrous flood; and he arraigned the guilty delinquent upon whose shoulders rested the "blame" of inundating the country with food. Truthfully did Mr. Gladstone in replying to him, say, "There appears to be little difference between the noble Lord and myself as to the Protection to be extended to existing interests."

This debate served the useful purpose of drawing from the government the positive avowal that no change in the Corn-Laws would be permitted. Mr. Gladstone declared that the measures of last year were a virtual contract between the government and the agricultural interest, and that it would be dishonorable to disturb it. This loving debate between the Whigs and the Tories as to whether a fixed duty or a sliding scale was most effective in protecting the aristocracy, was rudely broken into by blunt old Hume, who declared that all "Protection" was spoliation and injustice, and ought to be abolished. Sir Robert Peel declared that the measure of last year was a "compromise" between all the interests concerned, and which was assented to by the agriculturists on the faith of its being adhered to, therefore it was his deter-

mination to maintain the law of last session. Notwithstanding this "determination," there was a fidgety unrest among the monopolists, for fear that the ministers would be again driven from their policy by the Anti-Corn-Law League. The motion was defeated by a majority of ninety-nine.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### OVER-PRODUCTION.

English Prejudice in Favor of Protection—Reason for it—  
Fear of Foreign Competition—Dread of Abundance—  
Scarcity Makes Work—Over-Production—The Working  
People of England—Farm Laborers—City Workmen—  
Their Characteristics—Chartist Opposition to the League  
—Low Wages—The Charter.

THUS far we have chiefly spoken of the Free Trade struggle as it was fought in Parliament up to the summer of 1843. Outside, the contest was sharper still, and far more vigorous. The work of the reformers was harder too. A whole people had to be aroused, instructed, convinced. An irresistible public opinion must be created without which all efforts in Parliament would be in vain. The upper classes of the English people were Protectionists from interest, the lower classes from prejudice. The middle classes though largely Protectionists were divided, but amongst them lay the strength of the Free Traders.

It is not surprising that the English lower classes were Protectionists. All their prejudices were in favor of restricting competition. The Englishman was exclusive, partly by nature, and partly because of geographical conditions. His island being cut off by the sea from the continent



of Europe, he became a sea-girt sort of personage himself. He was boastful and conceited. He displayed a rude contempt towards all foreigners, never admitting that any change of latitude or longitude could make a foreigner of him. Even in Paris he complacently regarded all the Frenchmen he met upon the Boulevards as "Foreigners." The extravagance of the comic opera was genuine poetry to him. He seriously believed that it was "greatly to his credit" that he was an Englishman; and he considered it highly meritorious that "in spite of all temptations to belong to other nations, he remained an Englishman." He was always bidding "defiance to the world." He christened his war ships "Bulldog," "Vixen," "Spitfire," "Destruction," "Devastation," "Terrible," "Vengeance," "Conquerer," and similar pet names. His great chest would pant like a blacksmith's bellows as he roared in the ears of all mankind his unpolite refrain, "Britannia rules the waves." He thought that the people of other nations had but little to eat; that the Frenchman lived on frogs, the Italian on maccaroni, and the German on an inferior quality of cabbage. He was a natural Protectionist.

The lower classes of the English people were much like the lower classes of some other people, insanely jealous of those whom they regarded as lower yet than themselves. In America it may be the negro or the Chinaman. In England it was the frog-eating Frenchman, the frugal Dutch-

man, who was too mean to squander all his wages, or the barbarian Russian who lived on tallow, whose clothes cost him nothing, the skin of an ox furnishing a complete outfit for a year. Any demagogue could easily arouse the enthusiasm of the lower classes by denouncing Free Traders as an unpatriotic set who were seeking to subject the noble British workman to a ruinous competition with the "pauper workman" of the continent. It was a part of the stock business of Tory statesmen at every hustings in the Kingdom to glorify the wisdom of that policy which was to make England "independent of foreigners," especially in the matter of meat and flour. Even enlightened statesmen like Peel and Gladstone did not disdain to use this narrow argument in the House of Commons itself.

In addition to their insular prejudices the English working classes believed in the blessings of scarcity, and the miseries of abundance. They lived constantly in fear of an impossible dragon called "over-production." They regarded machinery as their chief enemy because it saved labor, and filled shops and warehouses with goods. It was the grimy coal-fed monster, breathing smoke and flame whose offspring was "over-production." They opposed railroads because of their labor-saving tendency, and many of them could tell the exact number of men thrown "out of work," between London and Bristol, by the Great Western Railway alone. There were so many stage coach

men and guards, so many wagoners whose busy teams moved the merchandise of the country, so many inns where the stages stopped for dinner or supper, and to change horses, involving the employment of so many ostlers, cooks, waiters, and other people. Then look at the blacksmiths, whose business it was to shoe the stage horses, and the wagon horses; look at the harness-makers, whose business it was to make the harness for them. Think of the ruin of the inn-keepers themselves, to say nothing of the loss to the farmers and stock-raisers, who would no longer have a market for coach horses, or wagon horses, or for the oats to feed them. It was in vain to point out the army of men that the railroads would throw "into work," the comforts and conveniences they would multiply to all the people. These advantages were too abstract and remote. The injuries were direct, near, and palpable.

In the political economy of the English artisan, all destruction of property was a blessing, because to replace the property gave employment to workmen. The burning down of a block of buildings was a providential gift because the houses had to be rebuilt, thereby giving employment to bricklayers and carpenters. About this time a remarkable hailstorm visited London. Every exposed pane of glass was broken by the hailstones. This was regarded as a merciful dispensation, because it made a scarcity of glass in London.

It was merely a sum in simple addition to show the value of the storm. It was evident that the glassmakers and the glaziers would make a good thing out of it, and the money they earned would be spent for the comforts and necessities of life. The tailor and the shoemaker would get some of it, and the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick-maker. It was useless to explain that this money was drawn from other employments of industry, and that to the full value of the glass destroyed it was a total loss to the community. This, too, was abstract; it was like complex fractions to scholars who were not yet out of long division.

All public improvements that lessened wear and tear were bitterly opposed by those primitive economists. The wooden pavement was a dangerous innovation, because if it should be generally used in a great city like London, it was easy to see that the wear and tear of horse-shoes and wagon wheels would be greatly lessened, and blacksmiths would be thrown "out of work." A street sweeping machine invented about this time had to be protected by the police, as a mob of scavengers were determined to prevent its use. It was claimed that the machine could do the work of twenty men. The scavengers, of course, made their living by dirt; the more dirt, the more work for them. Here was a machine that caused an "over-production" of cleanliness, and true to their Protectionist ideas they proceeded to destroy it.



There is nothing surprising in all this. An ignorant people only reason from first appearances to the immediate and visible result. To the unthinking workingmen of England, the first effect of a labor-saving machine was to throw somebody "out of work," the first effect of the hailstorm was to throw somebody "into work," therefore they looked the machine as an enemy, upon the storm as a friend. In like manner the first effect of a cargo of merchandise imported from a foreign country was to make abundance and to lessen the demand for labor in that class of goods, therefore they were in favor of promoting scarcity by a high protective tariff that should compel those goods to stay across the sea.

It was not to be expected that they would voluntarily explore the depths of political science, and thus obtain a knowledge of the true principles of social and political economy any more than to expect them to saw wood for pleasure. Their minds soon became tired when not aided by visible object lessons, and the men who could appeal to their mutual experiences had a great advantage over the abstract reasoner, no matter how well built his logical structure was. Often in the coffee houses, the club rooms, and other places where workingmen used to meet and discuss the problems of the English political and social system, the Protectionist champion, confused and overwhelmed by the reasoning of his Free Trade antagonist, would extricate himself by an in-

genious recourse to the "over-production" hobgoblin. "What caused the distress," he would shout, "in the hard winter of 1835?" "Over-production." "What shut down the Birmingham forges in 1836?" "Over-production." "What stopped the wheels in Lancashire and Yorkshire in 1837?" "Over-production." "What sent the shoe makers of Northampton on the tramp in 1838?" "Over-production;" and so on to the end of the chapter. It was certain that among the audience were some of the fancied victims of over-production, and all the rest were sympathisers. It was of no use to explain to them that what they called "over-production" was nothing but the blessing of plenty, which, if not hindered by Protective legislation, would soon diffuse itself throughout all the land, sharing its benefits among all the people, acting and re-acting upon every member of the community. To comprehend this required a mental effort, and that was labor. They were not ready to think just then, and the discomfited Free Trader would take his seat leaving the victory to his adversary. The working-men of England had literally to be educated in sounder principles, to be taught like children from the alphabet of politics upwards until they were forced to throw aside their prejudices to make room for the knowledge that was crowding itself upon them. "If you bring the truth home to a man," said Cobden, "he must embrace it." To bring the truth home to the people of England

became the duty of the League. Let us see how well the work was done.

The working people of England were divided into two classes, the city operatives and the rural population. They differed from each other in dress, in dialect, in manners, and in personal appearance. The city workman was quick of movement and of great mental activity, the farm laborer was heavy, dull, and slow. He aspired to nothing higher than eating, drinking, and rest. His ideal of superlative happiness was written in a song he was very fond of singing, the refrain of which was something like the following,

“If I wur the King I would eat fat bacon,  
And swing upon a gate all day.”

Although the Corn-Laws were made for the “Protection” of agricultural industry, the tiller of the soil was overworked and underpaid. His life was passed in abject poverty. He had no more hope than the team he drove. He was still in fact—though not in law—a serf; and he went with the land. Whoever bought that bought him. In 1843 the traveler in the West Riding of Yorkshire, meeting a rustic with a drove of hogs in front of him, looked for the brass collar around his neck, expecting to read upon it the old familiar legend preserved by Scott, “Gurth, the son of Beowolf, is the born thrall of Cedric of Rotherwood.” The brass collar was not there, but the swineherd was as much a “thrall” as was his ancestor in the days of Wilfred of Ivanhoe. Less

than sixty miles from London, and within hearing of the bells of the Cambridge colleges, the rough-shod clown thrashed his master's grain with a flail, as his forefathers did in the days of Alfred the Great. He knew no more than they, and his dialect was very much like theirs. Of the politics of England he knew about as much as he did of the politics of Japan. Although great in numbers the agricultural laborers contributed literally nothing to that public opinion which is so important an element in the government of England. When the Free Trade missionaries went amongst them they were mobbed and pelted out of the villages by the "yeomanry" and the agents of the landlords. They were treated very much as Abolition lecturers would be treated by the Carolina planters in the days before the war.

It was different with the working people in the towns. They were restless, ambitious, and discontented. They mingled much together, and they discussed political and social problems. They formed clubs, benefit societies, and trade-unions. They attended political meetings and debating clubs; they read a great deal, and they could furnish more stump orators to the hundred men than even we can furnish in America. There was always a speaker on hand, and an audience. It is a prevalent opinion that the "stump orator" is peculiarly an American production, but this is a mistake. He abounds in England, and there his gab flows on forever. It is not confined as in



America to the election season; it flourishes at all seasons. It is perennial in England, and always fresh and blooming. One reason for this is that the drinking places in England are also places of resort. They are not "saloons" as in America, merely drinking places, and nothing more. They are what their name expresses, "public houses." They have rooms apart from the bar, and in those rooms men sit down and drink their beer. There they smoke their pipes and talk. Besides the "tap-room" and the "parlor," which are promiscuous and belong to everybody, there are rooms up-stairs for society meetings, clubs, and exclusive gatherings. Here business, debate, and conviviality mingle together. The orator fires away while the audience drink their beer and smoke. If the English public-houses have rendered any compensation for the mischief they have made, it must be in furnishing those rooms for association, and for the discussion of public questions. They have been the nurseries of the stump orators of England. For the reason above given it was necessarily in the towns that the principal work of the League was done.

At first the League met with opposition even in the towns; and its meetings were often interrupted by hostile mobs, and sometimes broken up. The Chartists insisted that a radical reform of the government itself should be attempted before economic changes. When universal suffrage and a free ballot were obtained, then would be time

enough to repeal the Corn-Laws; and they demanded that the League should unite with them. Besides, the jealousy of foreign competition was not easily removed; "foreign pauper labor" was still a phrase to conjure with; and there was a prevalent suspicion that the object of the League was to lower the wages of the workingmen. In 1843 *The Quarterly Review* made the accusation in these words, "The first great object of the League was and is the lowering of wages." This view of it had prevailed from the very first organization of the League, and often in the Free Trade meetings the Chartists were able to defeat the Free Trade resolutions and carry resolutions of their own. In 1849 there was a great Anti-Corn-Law meeting at Rochdale, at which Mr. Bright offered a Free Trade resolution, and supported it with one of his most convincing speeches; but Mr. James Taylor, a Chartist, proposed an amendment to the effect that before agitating for a repeal of the Corn-Laws the people should obtain possession of their political rights. The amendment was adopted. In Smith's *Life of John Bright*, the biographer in relating this incident, remarks, "The amendment was carried, the Chartists at that moment having the ear of the working classes in the chief town of Lancashire and Yorkshire." In the position they took on that question the Chartists were wrong. The result has demonstrated that a hungry people, while physically they may be more dangerous, are morally

not half so strong as the same people when well fed. The improved condition of the working men of England under a Free Trade policy has strengthened their moral influence so greatly that now the Charter is almost won. Henry Vincent, one of the founders of the Chartist party and its greatest orator, on the occasion of his last visit to America, said to the writer of this book, "We shall soon have the suffrage in England, where any man who is fit to use it can reach forth his hand and take it."

One paragraph as to the Chartists for the information of the American reader. The Chartists were a democratic, and to some extent, a revolutionary body, seeking a radical change in the political constitution of England. Their demands were embodied in a document called the Charter containing the following six points, 1. Universal Suffrage; 2. Vote by Ballot; 3. Annual Parliaments; 4. Equal Electoral Districts; 5. No Property Qualification for Members of Parliament, and 6. Payment of Members. Of these it will be seen that only the first and second are important principles, the others relating merely to matters of detail and expediency. The second and fifth have been obtained, and the suffrage has been so greatly extended by different laws, and will be so much further extended by Mr. Gladstone's bill now pending, that we may hope to see in 1884 the English ballot where Mr. Vincent said it would be, within the reach of every man with enterprise



enough to lift his hand and take it. In the years of the Free Trade struggle the Chartists included within their ranks two-thirds of all the workingmen of England and Scotland, outside the farm laborers. They had no strength in Ireland because Mr. O'Connell, who was then the paramount leader of the Irish people, kept them from joining the party. Although he was one of the original committee of ten that framed the Charter, he had become alarmed at the revolutionary character of the Chartists, and had abandoned them. It will readily be seen that the opposition of so large a body as the Chartist party was a serious obstacle in the way of the League. It may be acknowledged here also, that the leaders of the Chartist party were jealous of the leaders of the League. The Annual Register for 1839, speaking of the Chartists and their opposition to the repeal of the Corn-Laws, says, "in their opinion any relaxation of the duties upon the importation of corn would, by lowering the rate of wages turn to the profit of the employer alone."



## CHAPTER IX.

### WAGES.

*The Quarterly Review* Attacks the League—*Blackwood* on Wages—The Corn-Laws of no Consequence to Workingmen—The Rule of Wages as Understood in England—The Big Loaf Argument—The League Schoolmaster—Education of the People—Mr. Bright Elected for Durham—Growth of the Agitation—City of London Election.

THE "low wages" delusion was kept alive by all the Tory journals, and by all the opponents of revenue reform. Here is a specimen argument taken from *The Quarterly Review* for December 1842: "But even if Mr. Cobden could persuade us that his zeal was not strongly imbued with political ambition, can he deny, though he seems inclined to conceal that he and his associates were first prompted and are still stimulated in their warfare against the Corn-Laws by a more ignoble interest—mere mercantile gain—*the profit of the mills?* This it is that supplies the source and feeds the current of this agitation. This is the secret head of this muddy and inundating Nile. The leaders of the League, not satisfied with the great and sometimes enormous fortunes that have been realized under the present system of food and wages, are endeavoring by the undue influences of confederation, intimi-

dation, and deception—to reduce wages still lower—to the great injury of the working classes, the ruin of the agricultural interest, and to no immediate profit but their own.” Then in order to make its criticism of the League still more impressive, it condensed the whole argument into a mathematical formula. It said, “The pretense that those mill-owners are endeavoring to lower the price of bread *for the sake of the workmen* is so absurd that we really know not how to expose it more forcibly than by four words, *cheap bread=low wages.*” *The Review* concluded a very bitter article against the League by insinuating that it was a disloyal and illegal confederacy. It said, “We pronounce the existence of such associations disgraceful to our national character, and wholly incompatible either with the internal peace and commercial prosperity of the country—or in the highest meaning of the words, THE SAFETY OF THE STATE.”

While some of the protection journals confined their opposition to angry denunciations of the League, others did that and more. They tried not only to arouse the prejudices and inflame the passions, but to convince the reason also. Of this class was *Blackwood's Magazine*, perhaps the ablest advocate and defender of the Corn-Laws in all Great Britain. To be sure there was much sophistry in its argument, and no doubt it said a great deal that it did not believe; but after all, it was argument, most of it plausible, and much of it very hard to answer, because at that time experience had not

demonstrated the mistakes of it. In November, 1838, *Blackwood* reasoned thus

“Is it then really certain that an unrestricted importation of foreign grain would in the long run lower the money price of provisions to the British laborers? . . . . It might at first . . . . We have little doubt that the result in the end would be that the price of subsistence would be raised to the British consumer. The first effect would be to cheapen. That would throw the land out of cultivation. Home production would be small, and then of course the price of the foreign product would be increased.”

The above argument is worth study, because although falsified by actual experiment in England, it is just as good as new in America. It was as confidently proclaimed in Congress in 1884, as it was by *Blackwood* in 1838. All that the American reader has to do with these quotations is to change the word “grain” into “iron,” “wool,” “crocery” or whatever it is, and the Tory arguments of forty years ago are immediately reproduced in the “Protection” reasoning of 1884, in the United States. Any person can recognize them instantly who reads the debates in Congress, or the editorials in our Protectionist newspapers. The writer of the article from which the above quotation is taken, ingeniously hand-cuffs wages and rent together, and pretends that they must rise and fall together. He then says, “There would be no increase of supply, but we should get from foreign countries



instead of raising it in England. That's all." The echo of this exploded argument is repeatedly heard in the United States, although the sound of it has long been dead in England. Instead of saying fields will be thrown out of cultivation we say furnaces will be "blown out," mills will be "stopped," and then the "foreigner" having destroyed our home production will raise his prices, so that by lowering the tariff we make only temporary cheapness, to be followed in the end by higher prices, which we pay to the "foreigner" instead of to our own people. The most subtle analysis could not convince the English of the fallacy of this argument. They would not be convinced except by practical demonstration. They laugh at it now.

Mere speculative guesses were propounded by the Protectionists as though they were axioms that could not be disputed. For instance *Blackwood*, in that same article, "The fundamental error of the opponents of the Corn-Laws on this point is that they suppose two things that can never co-exist, viz., permanently reduced prices, and a permanently overflowing supply." This dogmatic mode of expression silenced many disputants by the sheer impudence of it. Thirty-five years experience has proven that permanent cheapness, and permanent supply can and do co-exist. That prices vary is true, for they are affected by a hundred accidents, but the cheapness of bread and meat in England has been permanent ever since the repeal



of the Corn-Laws, and the supply has been abundant and permanent. Besides, the ability to buy is an important ingredient of cheapness, and to increase this ability was one of the avowed objects of the Free Traders. Mr. Cobden repeatedly said that the mere nominal price of an article was a secondary consideration if the consumers of it were prosperous and had plenty of money to pay for it.

Following the same train of reasoning the writer in *Blackwood* goes on to say, "The impetus given to foreign agriculture would immediately and considerably lower the price of foreign grain, while the same causes would in the same proportions lower that of British. The foreign grower would beat down the British and get a monopoly of the British market into his hands." Let the reader substitute "American" for "British" in the above extract, and "manufactures" for "agriculture," and he will at once recognize a prominent figure in the tariff debate of 1884. The discarded English rags are patched and renovated, and soaped and brushed until they look like new, and our statesmen wear them with benighted vanity and pride. Having thrown all the land of England out of cultivation, and thus terrified the farmers, the writer proceeds to scare the workingmen in towns by the specter of "low wages." He says:

"Could the manufacturing operatives or any class of laborers keep their money wages up to their present level if a permanent reduction in the

price of the necessities of life had taken place? Nothing is clearer than that they could not. The money rate of wages wholly independent of the price of provisions from year to year is entirely regulated by it, other things being equal from ten years to ten years. If by the free importation of foreign grain the money price of it is reduced one-half, the ultimate result will be that wages will fall one-half also."

It was not known in England at that time, although some people suspected it, that the actual reverse of this was the true doctrine of wages, and that in proportion to the cheapness of necessities was the independence of the laboring man, and that in proportion to that independence was his command over the hours of labor and the rate of wages; that in a condition of physical comfort he could work less hours, and thus diminish competition in the labor market, and increase the rate of wages. In England a man might as well dispute the laws of Kepler now as this law, that in proportion to the dearness of home necessities to the laborer, so is the hardness of his labor, and the length of his working day.

The infallible authority among Protectionists is Adam Smith, whenever they find a paragraph written by him which seems to lean towards their side. Pleased as a miner who has found a big nugget, this writer in *Blackwood* said, "Mr. Smith has long ago stated that the most profitable trade in every State is that which is carried on between

the town and the country, and that the home market for our manufactures is worth all foreign markets put together." This doctrine has many qualifications. Often a country excels in manufactures which the native people do not use, or use to a limited extent, and then the rule fails. The people in a cold climate may excel greatly in the manufacture of an article which is used only in a hot climate, or like the watchmakers of Switzerland, they may excel in the manufacture of a luxury far in excess of the needs or means of their own people, and there also the rule fails. Again, the very condition of the doctrine is the prosperity of the home customer, and when that fails, the rule ceases. Under the strain of this test the doctrine broke down altogether in 1843. In that year the price of grain went so low as to greatly embarrass the farming community, and the reason was that their town customers had become too poor to buy bread enough to eat.

Two years after this, in June 1840, *Blackwood* again referred to the Corn-Laws, and condemned the effort to abolish them. With a supercilious air of patronage to the workingmen, it affected to regard the most tremendous question that had appeared in English politics since the revolution of 1688, as a merely sentimental difference between the Whigs and Tories, or as the clamor of a set of demagogues to serve their personal ambition. It pretended that the mighty matter of a people's food was a trifling affair in which the working-

men and their families had little or no concern. It said:

“With regard to the working classes we humbly conceive that their interest in this matter is of the slenderest possible description. The additional cheapness of food which is promised them, would probably never be realized, and at any rate seems a boon of the most insignificant magnitude. If accompanied with a corresponding or more than a corresponding decrease of wages which it infallibly would be, its advantage would entirely be destroyed. But the cry of cheap bread has long ceased to operate as a charm. The workingmen are too well informed to believe now that cheap bread is necessarily a boon to them . . . . Corn, we are told, is the standard of wages. If so, it is impossible that wages should not fall in amount in at least the same proportion as bread . . . . Cheap bread and cheap sugar mean, we believe, nothing less than lower wages, less prosperity, and increased competition of manual labor.”

The artful manner in which the folly and ignorance of the workingmen are flatteringly alluded to as wisdom and information, is worthy of all praise. It would do credit to a first class demagogue here. So also there was a creditable display of low cunning in the smooth encouragement given by the writer to the mischievous error about the law of wages which he well knew was misleading the workingmen of England at that time. They believed that wages was a certain allowance given



by employers at their own will, and that they established it on the quantity of food, clothing, and other comforts absolutely necessary to enable the artisan to live and work ; much as the Southern planter established the rations for his slaves. They believed that the employers were constantly watching to see how little the workingmen could subsist on, and that whenever they found they could do without something formerly enjoyed, wages would be lowered, because no longer necessary to buy that comfort, whatever it was. To this mistake was largely due the improvidence of the workingmen. They thought that economy was a vice and a meanness that a workingman ought not to be guilty of, because it threatened the wages of his brother craftsmen. The theory was that when the masters found out that the men could live on less, they would reduce their wages to the new standard of subsistence. The temperance movement in England was resisted by the workingmen on that principle. The brewers and publicans employed good talkers among the workingmen to proclaim that doctrine on the stump. They declared that the temperance movement was a scheme of the masters to lower wages, that for centuries the absolute necessity of beer to strengthen the workingman had been considered in establishing the rate of wages, and that if it should be demonstrated that he could do without beer, that element in his wages would be taken away. With loud scorn they would enquire, "Wot's a man without his

beer?" and the answer would be a round of applause. In pathetic poetry they would exclaim,

"Consarn my heyes,  
If hever I tries,  
To rob a poor man of his beer."

And for years a teetotaler was regarded as a spiritless fellow willing to put wages in jeopardy. Those poor ignorant people were the men that *Blackwood* was wheedling and flattering as "too well informed" to believe that cheap bread was a desirable thing. A touch of sadness falls upon us at the bare suspicion that the deceitful article above quoted was perhaps written by the great Kit North himself.

But the "low wages" delusion was not confined to the workingmen; many of the statesmen of the country entertained it, as the debates in Parliament will show. Sir Robert Peel himself, in his memoirs, confesses that for a long time he was misled by it. Neither was it proclaimed by the Protectionists alone; many of the Free Trade party conceded the principle that cheap food lowered wages, but not so much they said as to counterbalance the advantages of the cheapness. As far back as 1834, *The Edinburgh Review*, a Free Trade advocate, in an article on the poems of Ebenezer Elliott, just then published, which poems were chiefly devoted to a passionate condemnation of the Corn-Laws, said:

"Mr. Ebenezer Elliott admits that as a class the peasant is at present much worse off than the me-

chanic. The peasant would be worse off still were a repeal of the Corn-Laws, by lessening a demand for his labor, to lower his wages or throw him out of employment. To whatever other objections Corn-Laws may be exposed, our temporary facilities for the production of manufactures have been so vast that it may be doubted whether our manufacturing population has hitherto lost anything in real wages, or in employment from the addition made by the Corn-Laws to the price of bread."

Afterwards *The Edinburgh Review* changed its opinion, and admitted that wages rose as the prices of the necessities of life went down, and in eloquent criticism which is as valuable in America to-day as it was in England then, it denounced "That barbarous commercial code which every day tends more and more to diminish our enjoyments, to misdirect our industry, to render our trade hazardous as well as unproductive, and to divide society into hostile sections . . . . In time we shall feel the wickedness of exposing millions to privation in order to supply affluence to thousands, and in time the small class that governs us will discover that the permanence of its rule depends on its escaping the charge of selfish legislation."

There was but one way to reach the minds of workingmen saturated with the prejudices of centuries, jealous of all foreign rivalry, suspicious of the "masters," and densely ignorant of the laws of work and wages, of markets and of prices. That

way was taken by the League. It was hard work to teach them the abstract principles of political economy, or to show them the ultimate advantages of Free Trade. The surest way to reach them was by the concrete argument of a big loaf of bread for a small sum of money. A big loaf was an object lesson they could easily understand, and when thoroughly learned it made even abstract lessons easy. It was shown to them that the laws for the "protection of native industry" actually excluded from England shiploads of cheap flour, and meal, and meat that wanted to come in; that thereby scarcity was created by force of law, and the obvious and intended effect of the scarcity was to increase the price of bread. In the Free Trade processions big loaves of bread called Free Trade loaves, and small ones called Protection leaves were carried on poles, and exhibited at the meetings. It was thought even by the Free Traders that the discrepancy in the size of the loaves was a little exaggerated, but this was considered pardonable at the time. The result of the Free Trade policy has proved, however, that considering the improved power of buying bread now possessed by the workingmen, the discrepancy was not exaggerated at all. The big loaf argument at last took fast hold of the workingmen in the towns, and although they still clung to their sentimental politics, and demanded radical measures of parliamentary reform, a majority of them became disciples and adherents of the League. There was clap-trap



in this mode of argument, no doubt of it, but it was mathematical clap-trap, for the Free Traders proved by the figures how much the tariff increased the price of a barrel of flour; then it was easy to show what the size of a sixpenny loaf would be if the tax were taken from the flour of which it was made. The counter argument of "low wages" was weakened when Cobden called attention to the fact that in the experience of the men he was talking to, wages did not rise with the rise in the price of bread. The Protectionists tried to explain this by saying that the law did not adjust itself to sudden changes like those from year to year, but that "from ten years to ten years" it did. This was not convincing, and the argument lost ground.

The Free Traders acted wisely in the very beginning of the struggle by refusing to complicate their plans by any alliance with either of the "two great parties" inside Parliament, or with the third great party, the unrepresented Chartists outside. They kept in view the one great object, the repeal of the Corn Laws, and directed all their energies to that. Between 1839 and 1844, the League had distributed nine million tracts among the people, and had furnished a Free Trade library to every voter in the kingdom. This was Cobden's way of "bringing the truth home to a man." It cost a great deal of money, but the League had plenty. Cobden, Bright, and many orators of lesser note were continually engaged in addressing public meetings, and every part of England was can-

vassed; not the manufacturing towns alone, but also the rural districts. In 1842, Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright held meetings in many parts of Scotland, and they had little trouble in convincing the people of that country that the Protective System was injurious to every business and to every industry there. Mr. Bright confessed that the people of Scotland understood the Free Trade question much better than the people of England, and with the exception of the landlords and some of the great monopolists, they were nearly all Free Traders.

The business depression and the poverty of the people were, of course, potent arguments in the speeches of the leaders of the League. During the winter of 1842-3 the League and its literature were everywhere, and men who could not read were compelled to listen. Great meetings were held, and all the people in the towns were excited to a discussion of the great question. The Annual register for 1843, referring to the agitation, said: "Amidst the general stagnation and distress that prevailed, the Anti-Corn-Law League forced themselves upon the public ear, and they failed not to avail themselves freely of the themes of depression and distress as irresistible arguments against the continuance of that system of Protection which they defied the government with all its parliamentary majority to maintain." The excitement of the previous year, instead of being quieted by the amended tariff of 1842, and the

modification of the sliding scale, had been increased, if possible, by those measures. The League took advantage of every vacancy that occurred in the House of Commons to arouse the public interest by putting up Free Trade candidates, and although they were generally beaten at the polls, they made it uncomfortably plain that popular opinion was in their favor although the voting majorities were generally against them. In the spring of 1843, a vacancy having occurred for Durham, Mr. Bright offered himself as a candidate, and although the show of hands was largely in his favor, he was defeated by Lord Dungannon, the Protectionist candidate, by a majority of 102 in a poll of 912 votes. In July, Lord Dungannon having been unseated for bribery, Mr. Bright offered himself as a candidate again, and this time he was elected over Mr. Purvis, the Protectionist candidate, by 488 against 410. This, although a small matter in itself, was ominous of future disaster to the Protectionist cause. The landlords became alarmed and began to distrust the Tory government itself, for some of the ministers had made use of arguments and dropped expressions in debate and elsewhere, which although purely abstract, and having no relation to any practical and immediate measures, were, after all, unorthodox. The consequence was that they took up a weak defensive position, and gave the Free Traders all the advantage of a very enthusiastic attack.

By the autumn of 1843 the Free Trade agita-



tion had reached immense proportions, and the Protectionists had almost ceased to contend against it in argument. Timid people now pretended to feel alarmed at its dimensions. They believed in the principle, but thought the League was carrying things too far. It was shaking society too much. The League and its leaders were coarsely assailed by *The Times* and Reviews, and some of the Tory papers called upon the government to suppress it as a seditious and treasonable conspiracy. Lord Brougham, in the House of Lords, and Mr. Roebuck, in the House of Commons, both Free Traders, assailed the League with vehement anger. Its answer to all this denunciation was redoubled activity. Meetings were held in the agricultural districts right among the farmers, and Free Trade resolutions carried. At Bedford, Mr. Cobden maintained a six hours debate with the farmers of that county, and at the end of it a Free Trade resolution was carried by more than two to one. This was the most disheartening fact of all. The Tory papers bitterly denounced their own men, because they had not the courage to meet Cobden and Bright in argument, and when they did meet them, confessed themselves defeated by Free Trade fallacies that could easily be answered.

London was roused at last. The great halls were found quite insufficient for the Free Trade meetings. They would not hold a quarter of the multitudes that flocked to hear the Free Trade orators, so Drury Lane Theatre was engaged for



the purpose. Petitions to Parliament asking for Free Trade were displayed at the street corners, and signed by thousands of people. To emphasize the struggle a vacancy in Parliament for the city of London occurred in the fall of 1843. After a severe contest, Mr. Pattison, the Free Trade candidate, was elected over the Tory candidate, Mr. Baring, a nephew of Lord Ashburton, and a man of great wealth and personal popularity. This was an omen of further disaster to the Protectionists, and although the physical force of their majority in the House of Commons still remained intact, its moral vigor was visibly crumbling under the pressure of the League.

Early in the contest the opponents of the Corn-Laws discovered that a mere struggle to obtain for the manufacturing "interest" an advantage over the agricultural "interest" in the protective legislation of the country would have no moral strength whatever. They saw that in a competition to re-adjust the tariff on a basis more favorable for themselves, and less favorable for their rivals, their own arguments would be turned against them. The manufacturers soon perceived that their demand upon the agriculturists to surrender the privilege of extorting taxes from the people must be accompanied by an offer on their own part to surrender the power to do the same thing. Although some consented to this plan with reluctance, and maintained that the manufacturing interest should be "protected" in order

to diversify industry, and create a home market for the farmers, it was agreed that the only just and scientific reform was to equalize the privileges of all classes by a horizontal sweep-away of the whole Protective System, and that all duties on imports must be assessed and collected on the basis of "a tariff for revenue only."

In accordance with that principle the deputies of the manufacturers of Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Sheffield, Derby, Wolverhampton, Birmingham, and Glasgow, at their meeting held on the 5th of July, 1839, declared, "that this meeting, while it demands as an act of justice the total and immediate repeal of all laws imposing duties upon, and restricting the importation of corn and other articles of subsistence, is prepared to resign all claims to protection on home manufactures, and to carry out to their fullest extent, both as affects agriculture and manufactures, the true and peaceful principles of Free Trade, by removing all existing obstacles to the unrestricted interchange of industry and capital among nations."

## CHAPTER X.

### RECIPROCITY.

Improved Condition of the Country at the Opening of 1844—The Ministry Strengthened by it—Success of the Tariff of 1842—Increased Revenue—Opening of Parliament—The Queen Congratulates Parliament on the Improved Condition of the Country—Lords in the House of Commons—The Sugar Duties—Debate Thereon—The Tariff as an Abolitionist—Mr. Cobden's Motion for a Committee on Tenant Farmers and Farmer Laborers—Debate Upon it—Mr. Gladstone's Reply to Cobden—Mr. Ricardo on Reciprocity.

THE year 1844 opened brightly for Sir Robert Peel and his government. There had been a fair harvest, food was more abundant, trade and manufactures were reviving, the revenue receipts exceeded the estimates, and there was a hopeful feeling throughout the country. The improved appearance of public affairs, it was thought by many, had weakened the League. This may be doubted, but it had certainly strengthened the ministry, and enabled Sir Robert Peel to speak in an emphatic and decided tone when he proclaimed the intention of the government to maintain the settlement of 1842, and that no further alterations in the Corn-Laws would be made. The strength of the government may have held men back from joining the League, or actively as-

sisting it, because of the belief that the work was hopeless; and although the Free Trade agitation in Parliament may have been less vigorous than last year, its strength outside did not appear to have abated. On the 21st of February an immense Free Trade meeting was held at Covent Garden Theatre, at which Mr. O'Connell made the principal speech of the evening. The theatre was packed in every part, and many thousands of people were crowded together outside unable to gain admission. Other meetings in different parts of the country were equally crowded and enthusiastic. Still, for all that, the ministers were not afraid to meet Parliament. They knew that their majority in the House of Commons was still solid and invincible; the Chancellor of the Exchequer could show a good budget, and they believed that the conservative sentiment outside was quite strong enough to take care of the League. On the 1st day of February, 1844, the Queen opened Parliament in person, and the speech from the throne contained this paragraph: "I congratulate you on the improved condition of several branches of the trade and manufactures of the country. I trust that the increased demand for labor has relieved, in a corresponding degree, many classes of my faithful subjects from sufferings and privations, which, at former periods, I have had occasion to deplore."

As Sir Robert Peel walked down to the House of Commons to meet Parliament at the opening



of the session of 1844, it was noticed that his eye was clear and bright, his step elastic, his bearing proud. The haggard look which he wore at the previous session was gone. His manner plainly told that he was not afraid of the Free Traders now. He was fortified with a weapon of offense against them, which, curiously enough, they themselves had furnished him. The country was comparatively prosperous, as he had proudly proclaimed in the speech from the throne. Less than two years had gone since he had yielded a slight experimental modification of the tariff, and the success of the experiment had been greater than even the Free Traders had dared to prophesy. The reduction of import duties had been followed by an increased revenue from imports. The modification of the Corn-Laws, slight as it was, and a good harvest, had made bread cheaper, and to the utter confounding of the Protectionists, cheaper bread had been accompanied by higher wages. A small abatement of the Protective System had been followed by increased manufacturing activity, capital had come forth from its hiding places, and was invested in farming, in trade, and in manufactures; labor was in demand, and the Prime Minister might very justly say, "If Cobden declared last year that I was individually responsible for the distress of the country, he must, this year, give me individually the credit for its improved condition."

The term prosperity here must be understood

in a comparative sense only. There was a great amount of poverty yet in the country, and hunger and misery everywhere, but as compared with the previous year the improvement was very great. Strangely enough, the success of the slight advance towards Free Trade made by Peel in the tariff of 1842, instead of being an encouragement to proceed further in the same direction, was given as a reason why he should stop. Help us to let well enough alone, was now the appeal of the minister to the House of Commons and the country. All the assaults of Cobden were parried by Peel with the Free Trade weapon he had borrowed from the League in 1842. By means of this, he said, I have improved the condition of the country; let us be content.

The country recognized that the "better times" were due to the labors of the League, but was not generous enough to say so. The action of the high-toned liberal papers was shuffling, compromising, and insincere. One of them, of great respectability and immense circulation, speaking joyfully of the Queen's speech and its congratulations to the country, said, "We express no opinion upon the effect of the speech upon the present Corn-Law agitation—the League does not want more vigorous opponents or more vigorous support than are engaged for or against it at the present crisis." As if every cause does not want all the support it can get. Its excuse for not supporting the League was that the League was

strong enough already. The truth, however, was that the liberal press was still Protectionist in feeling, and afraid of change. The very paper from which the above extract is taken, in its first article for New Year's, 1844, in a rather passionate appeal to the government concerning public affairs, and calling for all sorts of legislation in other directions, spoke thus timidly on the main question of the day, "Preserve the balance of power by sacrificing neither the commercialist nor the agriculturist to the cry of party;" which was easily translated to mean this, "As to the tariff and the Corn-Laws, do nothing."

Without stopping to discuss any further who was entitled to the credit of it, one thing is certain, the improved condition of the country gave the ministers a firmer grip on the government, and when Mr. Hume and Lord John Russell, on the first day of the session, both complained that no reference to the Corn-Laws was made in the Queen's speech, Sir Robert Peel, feeling the full strength of his position, gave positive notice that no alteration would be made in the Corn-Laws. Old Hume, however, nothing daunted, moved as an amendment to the address in answer to the royal speech, "that the provision laws should be considered and dealt with." He was overwhelmed by a majority of no less than 185 votes, the exact figures being: For the amendment 49, against it 235. Here again the Whigs and Tories voted "solid" for Protection.



## HISTORY OF FREE TRADE.

As this book is written chiefly for American readers, and as many of them are not acquainted with the somewhat intricate constitution of the English Parliament, a few words may not be out of place to explain why so many Lords have seats in the House of Commons. Briefly then, all peers of the realm are lords, but all lords are not peers of the realm. All the sons of Dukes and Marquises are "Lords" by courtesy, and the eldest sons of Dukes, Marquises, and Earls are allowed by courtesy to bear the second titles of their fathers. Thus, the Marquis of Lorne bears the second title of his father, the Duke of Argyle, but he is only a commoner for all that, and in his commission as Governor-General of Canada, he is described as John Campbell, Esquire, commonly called the Marquis of Lorne. Lord Randolph Churchill is only an esquire, although being the younger son of a Duke he bears the title of Lord by courtesy. Therefore the Lords so frequently mentioned in the proceedings of the House of Commons, are generally the younger sons of Dukes and Marquises or the eldest sons of Earls. Irish peers also, not being peers of England, are eligible to seats in the House of Commons. Thus Lord Palmerston sat in that House until the day of his death, for he never was a peer of England, but of Ireland only. Some readers may be puzzled to understand how it happens that in the beginning of this history Lord Stanley takes part in the debates in the House of Commons, and towards the latter part of it he appears in the House of Lords.



The explanation is this: Lord Stanley was the eldest son of an Earl, and sat in the House of Commons, bearing by courtesy the second title of his father. During Peel's administration it was felt that the Tories needed a little more debating power in the House of Lords, and Lord Stanley was created a peer in his own right. It will thus be understood that where "Lords" are mentioned in the proceedings of the House of Commons, they are Lords by courtesy only, or peers of Ireland.

The first assault upon the tariff in the session of 1844 was an innocent question put by Mr. Pattison, the recently elected member for the city of London, to Sir Robert Peel. Mr. Pattison inquired whether or not the sugar duties would be altered this session. Sir Robert replied, "That is a question which I should have expected would have been asked by the youngest member of this house—for certainly nothing but the circumstance of a member being the youngest among us could justify such a question." As Mr. Pattison was a very great personage, indeed, an elderly gentleman, member for the city of London, Governor of the Bank of England, and a member of Parliament years ago, the House enjoyed Peel's banter very much, for Mr. Pattison having just been elected to fill a vacancy was in fact the youngest member of the House. As Peel was a very serious man, who seldom "chaffed" anybody, the incident served to show that he was in high spirits because of the better appearance of public affairs, and the success of

the measures he had adopted and passed in 1842. But the sugar question was up again in a few days in such a shape that it could not be jested out of court, but must be seriously discussed on its merits. It may be a matter of surprise that as there was no sugar grown in England, the English Parliament should so persistently exclude foreign sugar from England by a high protective tariff, but the explanation is that the great sugar plantations in Jamaica and the other British West Indies, were mostly owned by Englishmen, and the high tariff was defended on the ground that it was our duty "to protect the industry of our own colonies." To accomplish this patriotic object, and to ensure dear sugar to the English people, all foreign sugar was excluded from British ports by a protective tariff amounting to 300 per cent. *ad valorem*.

On the 6th of March Mr. Labouchere brought up the sugar question in a discussion of the commercial relations existing between Great Britain and Brazil. Mr. Labouchere had been a member of the Whig ministry, he was well provided with facts, and he made an argument that greatly embarrassed the government. The debate is worth study, because of the striking parallel it shows between the commerce of England and Brazil in 1844, and that of the United States and Brazil in 1884. Mr. Labouchere showed the folly of the doctrine that exports made nations rich and imports made them poor. The highest duty levied on English goods by the customs laws of Brazil

was fifteen per cent. *ad valorem*, while the useful products of Brazil were excluded from English ports by a protective tariff amounting to prohibition. The result of this nonsense was that an English vessel having carried a cargo of English goods to Brazil, and exchanged them there for sugar, could not bring that sugar to England, but must take it to some third country and sell it there, returning home in ballast. The wisdom of sending ships out laden, and bringing them back empty, was as vehemently defended in the British Parliament in 1844 as it was in the American Parliament in 1884. Now all the ports of Britain offer welcome to the wealth of Brazil. Her trade with Brazil is very great, while ours has become so contemptible that when President Garfield's ambassador started for that country he was compelled to go to England in order to engage a passage to Rio Janeiro.

Mr. Gladstone, finding himself quite unable to answer Mr. Labouchere with any statesmanlike or economic reasons, fell back to philanthropic and humanitarian ground. He declared that the effect of lowering the duty on Brazilian sugar would be to encourage the continuation of slavery in Brazil, and whatever the commercial advantage might be, they must not overlook the considerations of humanity. This was cant, so transparent that it imposed not on anybody, and Mr. Gladstone's embarrassed manner showed that it had not imposed on him. He easily defeated Mr. Labouchere by a majority of seventy-three.



Early in the session Mr. Cobden gave notice of a motion for a special committee to enquire into the effects of import duties in their bearing upon tenant farmers and farm laborers. This was carrying the war into Africa; it was part of the aggressive policy of the League. The majority in Parliament had been contending that those duties were imposed for the "protection" of those very classes whose condition Mr. Cobden proposed to enquire into. They dared not grant the motion, for they well knew that Cobden would bring a hatful of facts to demonstrate that every year the tenant farmer was sinking deeper into debt, and that the farm laborer was shivering on the very verge of starvation. "I only seek for inquiry," said Mr. Cobden, "and I want both sides to be heard." "Nothing would suit me better than for Lord Spencer and Lord Ducie to be examined on the one side, and the Duke of Richmond and the Duke of Buckingham on the other." He then went on to show that every prediction about corn had formerly been uttered about wool; "but," he enquired, "is there any lack of mutton? Are all the sheep-dogs dead, and all the shepherds in the poor-house? So far from it that when wool was at the highest price the largest quantity had been imported; when at the lowest price, the smallest quantity." This apparent paradox he explained by showing that ability to buy is an important agent in fixing prices. He condensed his explanation into the following sentence, "A high price



from prosperity may be permanent, a high price from scarcity must always be precarious." This was new learning to the House of Commons, and many of the members were startled by the doctrine. Peel himself became very thoughtful under the lesson, and acknowledged afterwards that the argument was new to him, and that it made a great impression upon him. Gladstone, too, looked very serious, for he was to answer Cobden. Then the orator turned upon the landlords with one of those fact-and-figure accusations that always made them tremble. He went right into the sanctuary of their order and smote the idol rent. "I can prove," he said, "that out of fifty-two shillings a quarter paid for wheat in the Lothians, twenty-six shillings goes to the landlord; and so it is likewise throughout England, half of what is eaten goes to the landlord." He concluded by pouring scornful satire upon the "home market" superstition. "You starve the agriculturists," he said, "and then offer them to us as a valuable class of home customers."

This speech marks one of the milestones on the Free Trade road. It had a great effect, and many Protectionists were unsettled by it. *The Times*, then strong Tory and Protectionist, and a scornful critic and hater of Cobden, confessed its power, and said that Mr. Cobden had stated his case "with great temper and moderation." It then lectured its own party with some asperity, and regretted that the Conservatives by their own

neglect should have allowed the question of the condition of the agricultural class to fall into Mr. Cobden's hands at all. Mr. Gladstone, in reply, declared that it was a "very able speech," and he complimented Mr. Cobden on the deep impression it had evidently made upon the House. At the same time he questioned the correctness of Mr. Cobden's calculations, and also the inferences he drew from them. He opposed the motion on the ground that a select committee could do no practical good, while the mere appointing of it might have a paralyzing effect upon trade and revenue. It would alarm the agriculturists who would regard the success of the motion as indicating another attack upon their interests, and a change in the existing law. Mr. Gladstone spoke in the embarrassed manner of an advocate, who has a strong suspicion that the other side is right, and that he himself is wrong. He "questioned" and "doubted," but was afraid to go to the jury lest his doubts might be removed. "I will prove what I say," declared Cobden, "if you will grant the committee." "I don't think you can," said Gladstone, "and I will not grant the committee."

The precursor of our inverted American statesmen who advocate a tariff for Protection with incidental revenue appeared in the person of a very stupid nobleman, Lord Pollington, who was of opinion that a tariff should not be imposed for the purpose of raising revenue, but to insure our "independence of foreigners," and to give pro-

tection to our own producers. Mr. F. Scott maintained the principle of getting rich by taxing one another for the benefit of one another. He opposed the motion, and warned the manufacturers that they would sink themselves in sinking the agriculturists. In other words, if the manufacturers should cease to pay taxes to the agriculturists, the latter would have no money with which to buy manufactured goods. Col. Wood thought he had made a good point against the Free Traders by mentioning the case of a bootmaker who was for a Free Trade in corn, but objected to a Free Trade in boots. The argument, however, counted against his own party, for it showed that the bootmaker was a Protectionist, and that a selfish desire to promote our own interests at the expense of other people is the essential principle of the whole Protective System. The bootmaker was willing that the law should make artificial high prices for those articles he had to sell, but he was not willing that it should make high prices for whatever he had to buy. He was a genuine Protectionist. Many other members participated in the debate, and the Tories criticised the League with great severity. Mr. Newdigate charged the League with exciting the recent disturbances in the north, and its methods of agitation were bitterly condemned. The League, however, refused to stand on the defensive, and Mr. Bright, replying to the accusation that the League was exciting the people, admitted the



fact, and promised that they would continue to do so. No evil, he said, had ever found redress until agitation had compelled it. Mr. Gladstone commanded the Protectionist forces, and he defeated Cobden by the triumphant majority of ninety-one—the Tory lucky number ; for it was the exact majority that brought Peel into power in 1841.

On the 19th of March the Free Trade question came up again in another shape. An attack was made by Mr. Ricardo on the “reciprocity” excuse for the restrictive system. This excuse had been offered by the government many times of late. They said, “shall we open our ports to nations who close theirs against us?” “Can we safely reduce the tariff on French boots so long as France maintains a tariff against English stockings?” “Can we admit American corn, so long as the United States excludes English crockery?” This kind of argument had great weight, for it appealed to national prejudice, and suggested the tariff hostility of other nations. On this reasoning was built the doctrine that commerce between nations must depend on treaty. The principle of it was that whatever we imported was an injury to our own people, consequently the importation must be forbidden, unless the nation whence it came would consent to inflict a counter-injury on its own people by importing something of ours in return. Mr. Ricardo made an assault upon the whole “reciprocity” theory as a useless and anti-



quoted mistake. He moved an address to the Crown, praying "that the principle of reciprocity might not be insisted on in our commercial negotiations, nor in the regulation of our customs duties." He showed the inutility of all the recent commercial diplomacy of England, and he contended that nations could much easier obtain what commercial objects might be desired by judicious legislation regarding their own imports rather than by intricate negotiations with other nations as to exports. He begged Sir Robert Peel not to continue a Protective System injurious to the people, in the expectation that other nations might pay them for relaxing it. Mr. Ewart seconded the motion, and said that it was idle to wait until foreign governments should offer to purchase a mitigation of the English restrictive system, and that the time was come when the government must adopt the principle recommended in the motion of Mr. Ricardo.

Once more Mr. Gladstone was chosen to answer the Free Traders. He opposed the motion, and declared that the principle of it was far too broad and sweeping. He maintained that there was an economic and philosophical distinction between duties for revenue and duties for protection, and that so long as that distinction remained foreign commerce must largely depend on treaty concessions regarding imports. The essence of Mr. Gladstone's argument was that so long as it is wise to exclude the products of a foreign nation

by a tariff levied for the protection of our own people against the competition of those products, it must be unwise to admit them unless that nation will pay for their admission by a corresponding concession in regard to our productions ; and that those mutual concessions must be made and guaranteed by treaty. Under those circumstances, he said, that it was not wise to fetter the government by an abstract declaration.

Lord Howick answered Mr. Gladstone. He was the son of Earl Grey, the Prime Minister who carried the Reform Bill of 1832. Judging by the debates in Parliament, Lord Howick appears to have had a mental grasp of economic principles quite unusual in an English nobleman. He regarded the proposition as a practical, and not an abstract one. He said, "The word 'abstract,' in the government sense of it, seems to mean something that is right in itself, but inconvenient to certain interests too strong to be offended by ministers. They have not yet shaken off the old mercantile theory, that the only valuable trade of a country consisted in her exports, whereas, in truth, her imports formed the most advantageous part of her commerce." Turning to Mr. Gladstone, Lord Howick said, "You ought to consider at once, and without reference to foreign countries, the means of reducing your import duties ; and if foreign countries neglect to follow your example, their own commercial loss will be their punishment." So little was the principle contended for

understood at that time, and so little was the interest in it, that the House was counted out in the middle of the debate, forty members not being present.

## CHAPTER XI.

### AT THE ZENITH.

The Resolutions of Mr. Villiers—Mr. Ferrand's Amendment—The Debate—Lord John Russell Declines to Vote—Mr. Gladstone Opposes the Resolutions—Lord Howick, Capt. Layard, and Mr. Milner Gibson Support Them—Mr. Gibson's Argument—Mr. Cobden Defends the League—Sir Robert Peel Declares that the Government will Adhere to the Present Law—The Resolutions Defeated by 204—Despondency of Cobden—Character of Peel's Relations to the Majority—Mr. Morley's Criticism of the Debate Answered—Peel's Argument for Protection—Adjournment of Parliament—Status of the League.

THE moral power of the League in Parliament was shown in the June debate on the annual motion of Mr. Villiers for a total repeal of the Corn-Laws, and the physical power of the administration was shown in the vote upon that motion. It was as follows: "That it is in evidence before this House that a large proportion of her Majesty's subjects are insufficiently provided with the first necessities of life; that nevertheless a Corn-Law is in force which restricts the supply of food, and thereby lessens its abundance; that any such restriction is indefensible in principle, injurious in operation, and ought to be abolished."

To that motion Mr. Ferrand offered this amendment: "That it is in evidence before this House



that a large proportion of her Majesty's subjects are insufficiently provided with the first necessities of life; that although a Corn-Law is in force which protects the supply of food produced by British capital and native industry, and thereby increases its abundance, whilst it lessens competition in the markets of labor; nevertheless, machinery has for many years lessened among the working classes the means of purchasing the same, and that such Corn-Law, having for its object the protection of British capital, and the encouragement of native labor, ought not to be abolished."

This amendment is now looked upon in England with the same curiosity that we gaze upon the plesiosaurus or some other skeleton from the antediluvian world; and we exhume it just to show what fantastic doctrines British statesmen and members of Parliament believed in forty years ago; and the amazing fact remains, that every bit of this crazy amendment, except the childish complaint against machinery, is sound Protectionist doctrine in the United States to-day. The obvious untruth that the exclusion of wheat, nails, or cloth from a country increases the abundance within that country of wheat, nails, and cloth, is as vigorously asserted by the Protectionist party in America now as it was by Mr. Ferrand in the English Parliament forty years ago. How familiar, too, is that hollow claptrap, "protection of British capital, and encouragement of native labor." There is also a large number of the American Pro-

tectionist party among the workingmen who believe in the whole amendment, and who regard the machinery dragon with the same dread that Mr. Ferrand regarded it in England.

This debate was notable for several reasons. During its progress the Whigs climbed on the fence, and they stayed there for a year, Lord John Russell declaring as he did so that he could not vote to remove all Protection, and he was not in favor of the existing law. Mr. Miles, a radical Tory, called upon the country gentlemen to listen to no compromise, but to maintain the law as it stood. This debate revealed a more important fact, which was, that the politics of the country was no longer a contest for office between the Whigs on the one side and the Tories on the other, but was a life and death struggle between the Protectionist majority inside Parliament, and the League outside. It was significant that many of the Tories, instead of directing their arguments to the question before the House, spent their time in criticising the League and denouncing its methods.

Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Gladstone were the chief speakers on the Protectionist side. Mr. Gladstone claimed a longer trial for the existing law. He contended that the experience of its operation had fully vindicated the statesmanship of the government, and had realized all their expectations. He condemned the agitation of the League as productive of the most mischievous consequences, and declared that if Parliament continued to argue the

question it would unsettle business, and be injurious to every interest in the country, and especially to the public credit. Amid great cheering from the Tory side, he claimed stability for the decisions of Parliament, and trusted that the House would not disturb the settlement that had been arrived at after a fair examination and adjustment of conflicting interests, and which adjustment had been put into law by the compromise measures of 1842.

Lord Howick was in favor of the motion. Referring to the unpleasant fact that the men who profited by the Corn-Laws were members of both houses of the legislature, he said, "The root of good government is sapped away when it is once discovered that those in whom political power is centered are perverting it to their own purposes. When the conviction seizes the people that the Corn-Laws exist only for the few, I warn you that the days of the law are numbered. The discontent of the people is the result of class legislation; that is what they say, and I think they are right."

Captain Layard made a strong speech in favor of the resolution. In the course of it he gave an amusing illustration of the Protective System. He said that when he was in China he had been shocked at the barbarous custom of contracting the feet of the children. Expressing to some Chinese gentlemen of his acquaintance his surprise at the continuance of it, they apologized for it by explaining that there were



certain old women who made their living by binding and contracting those children's feet, and that the welfare of the old women required the maintenance of the practice.

Mr. Milner Gibson defended the League. That there might be no misunderstanding of its objects he declared that it sought Free Trade not only in corn but in everything. He quoted from Paley that restraint of trade is an evil *per se*, and that the burthen of the argument in each particular case is on him by whom the restraint is defended. Those who interfered with the freedom of exchange were bound to show the advantages of their theories. In answer to the "home market" argument Mr. Gibson asked this question, "Do English purchasers give more for Manchester cotton goods than the American purchaser gives? If not, what is the advantage of the home market to the Manchester man?"

It may be a little humiliating to the English aristocracy, but the fact ought to be mentioned that the stupidest men that figured in Parliament were lords. In a debate where Peel, Gladstone, Cobden, Bright, Villiers, Gibson, and men of that character took part, it was extremely comical to see a lord jump up as Lord Rendlesham did, and maintain that high rents were an element of national prosperity, and that the fall of prices which would reduce rents would lower profits and wages. The rate of wages was regulated by the price of corn. To reduce wages, he said, was the object of the motion, and the purpose of the League.



Mr. Cobden having indorsed the broad platform just laid down by Mr. Gibson, reminded the House that it was not the League that was on trial but the law. He said, "You cannot put down the League by calling names, nor by such childish displays as have been seen to-night. It was said that the agriculturists could not meet taxation without Protection, but if the manufacturers were therefore to pay the taxes of the landlords who were to pay the taxes of the manufacturers, and how were you to requite those classes who are neither landlords nor farmers or manufacturers?" "I am for Free Trade in everything," said Mr. Cobden, "and if the Protection on corn is destroyed, the Protection on everything else will break down with it." Then pointing straight at the seats where sat the ministers, he said, "The Treasury bench has evaded the question; Lord Stanley has never met it, and I now challenge him to satisfy the Lancashire manufacturers of the justice of Protection." As Lord Stanley's father owned a large part of Lancashire, and derived enormous revenues from his possessions there, this challenge was one of those *ad hominem* thrusts in which Cobden was more skillful than any other man in Parliament. Lord Stanley did not reply.

Sir Robert Peel then rose to answer Cobden. He accepted the broad issue presented by Milner Gibson, and agreed that the repeal of the protective duties upon corn meant the withdrawal of Protection from manufactures, and from shipping

too. This he said would be productive of disaster to the country, and of almost certain ruin to Ireland. He made some amusement, and was loudly cheered when he pointed to the empty bench on the front opposition side where Lord John Russell and the Whig leaders usually sat. He criticised Lord John Russell's course in declining to vote, and taunted the Whigs with dodging the question. Sir Robert adopted a rather exultant manner towards the League, and said that their mitigated tone indicated that they felt that they had outstripped the feelings of the people, and could no longer stand upon the ground they had so imprudently attempted to occupy. He declared himself in favor of Protection, not for the sake of the landlords, but from a conviction of the evils which the removal of prohibition would inflict upon the general interests of the country, domestic and colonial. He contended that the present law had worked well, and should have a further trial. Amid uproarious cheering from the "country gentlemen," he declared that it was the intention of the government to adhere to the present law. There was a fatal weakness in his argument, and he gave away his party and his case together when he said that he would not contest the principles of Mr. Villiers in the abstract, "for they might in the abstract be correct, and justified by philosophical considerations."

The Tories did not worry themselves over the moral condemnation of "Protection" contained in

those admissions. All they cared about was the promise of the Prime Minister that monopoly should not be disturbed. They were so exultant that when Mr. Bright rose to address the House they listened to him with much impatience, and finally coughed him down. Mr. Villiers in closing the debate made a remarkable prediction. After referring to the fact that nobody had dared to controvert his arguments, he told the "country gentlemen," who cheered the Prime Minister so vigorously, that Sir Robert Peel had made a similar speech to them in 1839, and had afterwards thrown them overboard. The same thing would happen again. This prophesy was literally fulfilled within two years. The motion was lost by 328 against 124, a stolid majority of 204, which disheartened even Cobden whose high spirits had never failed him since the organization of the League.

When the vote was taken at the close of the great debate of 1844, the dawn of the summer day was just peeping through the windows of the House of Commons. It was greeted by the boisterous cheers of the Protectionist majority, stimulated not only by victory, but by wine. Those cheers smote the very heart of Cobden, and he sat there absolutely stunned by the blow. Five years of incessant labor night and day had told heavily upon him, and mind and body needed rest together. There was another man there, however, who was smitten harder than Cobden, upon



whose conscience this noisy cheering struck with a mocking sound. This was the great minister who had led the exultant majority to victory. He, and he alone, heard in those cheers the knell of the noisy monopoly that was making them. He knew that the flushed men he commanded last night were utterly besotted and selfish; that the wants of the people were nothing to them, so long as they could enjoy the unjust profits of "Protection." He knew that if they had constituted the "landed interest" in Canaan at the time of the dearth, they would have demanded a high protective tariff against the "pauper" corn of Egypt and the rich alluvium of the Nile. In the argument he made for them he knew that he was wrong. The disputant who concedes that the position of his adversary is "correct in the abstract and justified by philosophical considerations," knows that he himself is in a false position; and if he is a conscientious man it will not take him long to reach the platform where his adversary stands.

While Cobden sat in dismay gazing at the dense majority of 204, and believing it to be solid, Peel knew that it was hollow; while Cobden was fearful that the League had failed, Peel knew that it had succeeded; that it was fast becoming irresistible; that ere long it would conquer all opposition, and that not even the British monarchy could safely stand in its way. We all know now, what nobody knew then, that the only arguments



that made any impression upon Peel in that debate were not those of any member of his own party, nor of the Whigs, but only those of Cobden, Villiers, Bright, and Gibson. In this hour of its great triumph the Tory chieftain knew that the end of "Protection" was at hand.

Mr. Morley, in his "Life of Cobden," describes the struggle made by the Free Traders that night as a "very hollow performance." There is really no just ground for that opinion. It is only the despondency of Cobden re-acting upon his biographer. It is based on the serious physical defeat inflicted that night upon the Free Traders, and the air of superiority and conquest assumed by the Protectionists. These airs were largely affectation and assumption, for they knew that the moral triumph of the debate was not on their side. The sneer of Mr. Gladstone that "the League is a thing of no practical moment now, its parade and ceremonial are the most important parts of it," was merely a bit of sarcastic tinsel ornamenting a "very hollow" defense of the Protective System. He certainly was too wise to believe it. The fact that Mr. Gladstone and the Tories wandered from the question to attack the League, is proof that they were overmatched in argument, and surely a "hollow performance" would not make the Prime Minister concede that his opponents had on their side all the philosophy of the question. Milner Gibson was very strong that night. He planted himself on the solid rock

of the Creator's grand design, and man's adaptation to it. He declared that to help one another, to be friends with one another, and to trade with one another, is the very law of human civilization; and he demanded that those who imposed restraints upon trade should give good reasons why.

How did the Tories answer him? Why, they said that they had enjoyed Protection so long that they could not live without it; thus coolly violating a maxim of the law that no man shall take advantage of his own wrong; in other words, they contended that a wrong that had existed for a long time, became, at last, a right. But Mr. Gibson showed that no length of time would sanctify a wrong, and that the monopoly of the landlords had never been a quiet possession and undisturbed enjoyment; that it had always been protested against, and could never ripen into a good title.

How did Peel answer him? By advancing the popular American mistake that "Protection" is a system in which all parties are interested; that it had become woven into the political organization of the country, and that it gave to all industries an equal and mutual assistance; that the agriculturists were interested in "Protection" to manufactures, that the manufacturers were interested in "Protection" to agriculture, and that both of them were interested in "Protection" to shipping and commerce, that all must stand or

fall together, and that although the motion was only aimed at corn, yet if Protection should be withdrawn from that, it must be withdrawn from everything else, which would be disastrous to the country. But Mr. Cobden showed in that very debate that there cannot be any such thing as universal Protection, because if every interest in a community is protected equally, then nobody is protected at all. Protection being a tax levied for the benefit of certain trades and occupations, somebody has to pay it, or the object of it fails. To form ourselves into a circle, and each man take a tax from the pocket of his neighbor on the right, and drop it into the pocket of his neighbor on the left, does no good, because, when the starting place is reached again, then nobody has made anything at all.

Shortly after this debate Parliament adjourned, and did not meet again until February, 1845. The temperament of Cobden was not of a character to remain despondent long, and besides, there was no occasion for discouragement. The confession of the Prime Minister that Free Trade principles were right in the abstract, had a great effect outside the walls of Parliament. Many men thought that if that were true they might possibly be wise in the actual also. During the recess there were great accessions to the League. To some people who looked only on the surface of affairs, it seemed as if there was a lull in the Corn-Law agitation, and that the better times had deprived

the League of its strength. But the League might well claim, and did claim, that the improved condition of the country was due to the modification of the Protective System in the tariff of 1842, and that if the country should discard "Protection" altogether, the good times would be better still.



## CHAPTER XII.

### A SURPLUS REVENUE.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer Shows a Favorable Balance Sheet—His Plan to Reduce the Surplus Revenue—Lord John Russell Ridicules the Discrimination Against Slave Grown Sugar—State of the Country at the Beginning of 1845—Increasing Prosperity in all Branches of Business—Clamor of the “Interests” for Favors in the Reduction of the Tariff—Lord Beaconsfield’s Opinion of the Strength of the Administration—The Free Trade Bazaar at Covent Garden Theatre—The Opening of Parliament—The Queen Rejoices in the Prosperity of the Country—The Duke of Richmond Demands Relief for the Agricultural Classes—Mr. Gladstone Leaves the Cabinet.

ONE element of the Tory glorification in the session of 1844 was the good looking budget which the Chancellor of the Exchequer was able to show, and there was an immense crowd in the House of Commons on the night of the 29th of April to hear his financial statement. The credit of the country, too, had been improving under Sir Robert Peel’s administration. In April, 1844, the government three-per-cents sold at par, for the first time since the year 1749, and the revenues for the year showed a surplus instead of a deficiency. There was an air of excusable exultation about Mr. Goulburn, the Chancellor of the Ex-

chequer, when he laid his annual balance-sheet upon the table of the House of Commons, for the scrutiny of Parliament and the country. He had a surplus in the treasury of about fifteen million dollars, and the manner in which he proposed to deal with it is well worthy the examination of American statesmen, who have also to solve the problem of how to dispose of a surplus revenue.

Although Mr. Goulburn was a high Tory and a Protectionist, it never occurred to him that the wise thing would be to waste the surplus revenue in order to preserve the system of tariff taxation; that the duty of the party in power was to invent schemes of bounty and plunder to absorb the surplus, and thus remove the reason for an amendment of the tariff. Strangely enough, the last thing that occurs to the mind of an American statesman under those circumstances, was the first thing that occurred to the English statesman, and he accompanied his budget with a plan to reduce tariff taxation to the amount of the surplus. He also put his reductions where they would do the most good, chiefly on the necessities of life, and the raw materials of manufactures. He proposed to reduce the tariff on coffee four cents per pound, and he made a considerable advance towards a "free breakfast table" by reducing the duty on sugar. He put vinegar on the free list. There were fools who sneered at this, and laughed at "cheap pickles," but Mr. Goulburn was not thinking of pickles at all. Vinegar was largely used in

manufactures, especially in calico printing, and that's what he was thinking of. He made a reduction of seven shillings per cwt. on currants. To some persons this may seem like relieving the tax on luxuries; but those who know that plum-pudding is not a luxury to an Englishman, but one of the necessities of life, will see in a moment the value of this reduction. In the manufacture of a genuine dyspeptic, indigestible plum-pudding, currants are only secondary in importance to plums themselves.

The most important article, however, which Mr. Goulburn proposed to strike out of the tariff was wool. The duty on this article he proposed to abolish altogether. The plan of encouraging "sheep husbandry" by a high tariff on wool had failed. There were plenty of sentimental patriots who still maintained the principle of protecting the high-toned and expensive sheep of old England from the competition of the pauper sheep of the United States and Brazil; but their theories had almost passed out of the practical statesmanship of the country. The exclusion of foreign wool from England had failed to make high prices permanent, for these reasons: it had crippled the supply of raw material to the wool manufacturer, the spasmodic high prices of the home product had gone into his cloth; this had shut him out of the foreign markets. High prices could not be maintained in the home market, because only a select portion of

the people could afford to pay them. As the demand for cloth decreased, the consumption of wool declined, and at last the price of wool went down below the low water mark of fair profit, not because of the abundance of wool in the market, but because of the poverty of customers. The attempt to make high prices of wool by law, and keep them up, had proved as futile as would an act of Parliament prescribing how many pounds of wool a ram should wear in his overcoat. The chief defect of Mr. Goulburn's plan was that in reducing the duties on sugar he had preserved the protective discrimination in favor of the sugar of the British colonies. He gave the old excuse for this, and said that his object was to prevent sugar, "the produce of countries tainted with slavery, from being imported into Great Britain and Ireland."

Lord John Russell ridiculed this pretension, and said, "Surely it is very new to erect a pulpit in the custom house, and convert all the tide-waiters and appraisers into abolition preachers." It seems a little foolish now, but there were many good men in England, and wise men too, men like Dr. Lushington and Mr. O'Connell, who long believed that the commercial code of Britain might be made to do missionary work among the heathen; and that it might be "so adjusted" as to reward good nations and punish bad ones. Lord John Russell pointed out the inconsistency of Mr. Goulburn, who was discouraging slavery in Brazil by an abolition discrimination against her sugar,



and encouraging it by a pro-slavery reduction in favor of her coffee. He bantered Sir Robert Peel a little about his tariff of 1842, wherein he had applied the principle of "buying in the cheapest market" to onion seed, spices and herrings, and he hoped that the time was not far distant when he would apply it to the essential food of the people. These criticisms were not very serious. They fell harmless on a public ledger that showed a favorable balance, and the "noble Lord" himself admitted in conclusion that nothing was proposed by Mr. Goulburn which was likely to be very dangerous to the financial interests of the country.

The year 1845 opened favorably for the government and the people. Affairs both foreign and domestic looked bright and promising; and the tone of the press generally was cheerful and encouraging. A non-partisan paper of great influence, in reviewing the past year, said, "As a nation, we have been prosperous; peace and plenty have blessed the land, and beneath their happy influence commerce has flourished. Nearly every branch of industry has been employed; the revenue has increased; and the abundance of capital seeking for investment created a competition that enabled the Chancellor of the Exchequer to dictate terms to the public creditor." *The Annual Register*, speaking at the end of the year, described the beginning of it thus, "The commencement of the year 1845 may be described as presenting on the whole a more than usually

prosperous state of affairs. The harvest had been a productive one, trade was brisk, the manufacturing classes well employed. The revenue gave symptoms of continued advance. The question of the Corn-Laws formed the greatest exception to unanimity, the continued exertions of the Anti-Corn-Law League still occasioning disquiet to the agricultural interest."

Again the government was confronted with the knotty problem of a "surplus revenue;" and again the Ministers must determine what to do with it. The problem was not an easy one to solve, on account of the rivalry of "interests," each clamoring to be favored in the anticipated reduction of taxation. As Sir Robert Peel had obtained from Parliament in 1842 the concession of an income tax to supply the temporary deficiency of the revenue for that year; and as it had been granted for three years only, the people who paid it naturally insisted that as the three years was about to expire, and there was a surplus in the treasury, the income tax should cease; but Sir Robert Peel had already made up his mind that it was a just tax, and that he would continue it three years longer. Strangely enough, although he was still the leader of the Protectionist party, he retained the income tax for Free Trade reasons. He had noticed that the protective import duties were a far greater tax upon the people and their industries than the amount that went into the treasury, and he had observed that the income tax relieved

this burden in proportion. Therefore, what he had obtained in 1842 as a mere expedient, he determined in 1845 to keep on principle. Although nobody knew anything about it, an early suspicion was abroad that the income tax would not be repealed; and as it was known from the quarterly returns of the treasury, that there was a surplus, the "interests" immediately began to agitate, each for a remission of the tax that pressed upon itself. The Ministers were overwhelmed with letters of counsel, advising them what duties ought to be lowered, and what ought to be abolished. The agricultural "interests" insisted on the repeal of the malt tax, which pressed heavily upon them. The glass makers declared that the window tax ought to be abolished, because it was an unjust burden upon their industry. The glaziers went with them thus far, and a little further; they required not only the repeal of the window tax, but also the removal of the protective tariff on glass; and right there, at the forks of the road, the glaziers and the glass makers parted company. The grocery "interests" wanted a reduction of the duties on tea and coffee and sugar, for they had noticed that the slight reduction of duty on those articles made by the tariff of 1842 had greatly increased their business. Naturally enough, every "interest" wanted its own special burdens removed, and the government found that how to deal with a surplus was a more embarrassing question than how to supply a deficiency.

Lord Beaconsfield, in his biography of Lord George Bentinck, expresses the opinion that the improved condition of the country in 1845 had rendered the League powerless to disturb the administration, and that Sir Robert Peel might have defied it if the bad harvest had not come; and that his government could have stood against even "the persuasive ingenuity of Cobden." But this is a superficial view of the matter, and is the opinion of the most spiteful Protectionist then in Parliament, every one of whose predictions was falsified by the event. The agitation may not have been so boisterous on the surface, but it was deeper down. The crowded meetings at Covent Garden Theatre showed that the League was still formidable; and a Ladies' Bazaar held there in the spring of 1845, netted over a hundred thousand dollars to the funds of the League. But the most convincing proof of all was furnished by Sir Robert Peel himself, as soon as Parliament convened. When the Queen opened Parliament in February, 1845, she said, "Increased activity pervades almost every branch of manufacture. Trade and commerce have been extended at home and abroad." . . . . "I congratulate you on the success of the measures, which, three years since, were adopted by Parliament for the purpose of supplying the deficiency in the public revenue." . . . . "The act which passed at that time for imposing a tax upon income will shortly expire. It will be for you in your wisdom to deter-



mine whether it may not be expedient to continue its operation for a further period."

Those remarks indicated that the revenue reform policy was to be persevered in; and they gave positive notice to the country that the income tax was not to be repealed. Scarcely had the usual address in answer to the royal speech been moved and seconded in the House of Lords, when up rose the Duke of Richmond, and began to whine like a mendicant about the distress of the "agricultural classes." These were the very "classes" that had been "protected" by the onerous taxation of other "classes" for many years; and now they came to Parliament begging for relief. This duke who was passing the hat around for them was the owner of tens of thousands of acres of the finest land in England and Scotland. He had a palace in the loveliest and most fertile part of England, and it took ten miles of wall to enclose the park around his mansion. To keep up the style and extravagance of a prince, he impoverished hundreds of his tenants, and then asked Parliament to relieve them at some other people's cost.

In the debate on the address in the House of Commons, some of the "landed gentry" there talked like the Duke of Richmond in the House of Lords, and they were severely stung by a remark of Lord John Russell, who, in criticising the royal speech because it said nothing about the Corn-Laws, declared that "Protection was the

bane of agriculture, rather than its support." This caused Mr. Miles to ask him, "Why, if he thought so, he had proposed a protective duty of eight shillings a quarter upon corn? Had he found it convenient to alter his views, and ally himself with the League?" This was a fair hit, for his Lordship was not yet ready to join the League.

It is not certain that Lord John Russell was contemplating any Free Trade movement, but it is highly probable that Peel suspected him, and determined to anticipate him; for in the debate on the address, he announced, contrary to all precedent, that he would not wait until April or May to make his financial statement, but would present it to the House next week. This, of course, compelled Lord John Russell to postpone his contemplated movement, whatever it might be. Sir Robert Peel was a little exultant in his manner, especially towards Lord John Russell, to whom he personally addressed the last part of his speech. "The House will then have an opportunity," he said, "of determining whether *under us* the condition of the country has deteriorated, or whether we continue to possess that confidence, without which we could not usefully conduct its affairs, and without which—the noble Lord will pardon me for saying—no government ought to remain in office." Mr. Villiers, however, was determined not to allow the government to monopolize all the congratulations, and he reminded Sir Robert Peel that the prosperity of

the country was owing to the relaxation of the Protective System.

The government was somewhat weakened at the commencement of 1845, by the loss of Mr. Gladstone, who had withdrawn from the cabinet because of a difference with Sir Robert Peel on the proposition to make a grant of money to the Roman Catholic College of Maynooth, in Ireland. The difference was not so much a matter of present opinion as of an old opinion which unfortunately was recorded against Mr. Gladstone in a book. In fact he had modified his opinion and was now willing to support the grant, but not as a minister of the crown. Here was more evidence that a politician should never write a book until his public life is closed. Mr. Gladstone had written a book in former days against granting money to Maynooth; and that book drove him from office. He could not retain office and support principles which he had condemned in his book, because such a course would subject him to the charge of acting from mercenary motives, and of sacrificing principle for place. He was therefore compelled to resign. There were some people who thought that he did not approve of the contemplated reduction of the sugar duties, and that he was glad to leave the cabinet on the Maynooth question, rather than on a question of commercial policy. There is not much ground for this opinion, for the probability is that Mr. Gladstone was already a Free Trader.

Two days after the opening of Parliament there was a very excited and somewhat angry discussion occasioned by a remark made by Mr. Cobden criticising the royal speech for not alluding to the Corn-Laws. It was a sort of rough and tumble affair, in which the extreme Protectionists and the extreme Free Traders participated; the others looking on. Mr. Bright made an emphatic talk, which Mr. Stafford O'Brien denounced as "bullying" the House. Sir Robert Peel sat placid and serene throughout the whole affair, and when it ended he quietly remarked that the performance was all in vain, and that he would not be provoked at present into a discussion of the Corn-Laws.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### NEARING THE END.

Anxiety as to the Financial Plans of the Government—Sir Robert Peel Opens a Free Trade Budget—Reductions of the Tariff—He Discards the Export Duties—Lord John Russell Criticises the Budget—Renewal of the Income Tax—Mr. Gladstone Defends the Government Plans—Mr. Macaulay Answers Him—Mr. Cobden Moves for a Committee on Agricultural Distress—Sidney Herbert—"Whining for Protection"—Mutiny of the Tories—Mr. Disraeli Assails Peel—The Insurrection Suppressed—Sir James Graham Declares for Protection—Sir Robert Peel Explains why it Should be Preserved—Lord John Russell's Resolutions—The Annual Resolutions of Mr. Villiers—Lord John Russell Supports them—Sir James Graham Appeals for Time—Sir Robert Peel Lectures his Party—Last Victory for the Protectionists.

THE coming statement of Sir Robert Peel was anxiously awaited by Parliament and the country. The Free Traders anticipated it with hope, the Protectionists with fear. The latter were somewhat distrustful of their leader, because, notwithstanding the declarations made by the government last summer, emphasized by the triumphant majority of two hundred and four against the motion of Mr. Villiers, they could see that the marvelous success of the reduction of the tariff in 1842 was working on the mind of Peel, and swaying him in the direction of commercial

reform. They saw that his ambition was aroused, and that in the desire to link his name forever to some new commercial policy of Britain, he might be tempted to experiment still further in the direction of Free Trade. However, they mustered strong on Friday night, the 14th of February, to encourage their great leader as he unfolded his financial plans. To their amazement and dismay he opened a Free Trade budget. To be sure he had not touched the Corn-Laws, but it was feared that he had passed sentence on them, and had only reprieved them for the time. Although great expectations had been formed of what was coming, neither party was prepared for the bold and comprehensive measure introduced by Peel. He began by making a large reduction in the sugar duties, sufficient, he said, to reduce the price of it to the consumer three cents a pound. He next proposed to strike the protective duty from four hundred and thirty articles then on the tariff list; and this he had the coolness to tell his Protectionist followers, "must be a great advantage to commerce." The suicidal duties on most of the raw materials of manufacturers were swept away, an example of financial wisdom well worthy the study of American statesmen. Among the raw materials made free, were silk, hemp, flax, yarns, except woolen, furniture goods, manures, oils, minerals, except copper ores, dye stuffs, drugs, etc. The people who made barrel-staves had been protected in that industry against the "pauper"

barrel-staves of the United States. Sir Robert Peel said that the coopers had memorialized him to remove the duty on barrel-staves. He proposed to give them a chance now ; and had struck from the tariff the duty on staves. The duty on cotton, he said, fell heavily on coarse fabrics, and of course upon the poor ; he proposed to abolish it altogether. He also struck off the excise duty on glass.

This was not all. Every rag of the protective export duties was discarded, even the venerable export duties on coal, which had stood firm for centuries, and which even John Stuart Mill thought might wisely be retained. In the ignorant ages of Protective philosophy, it was considered dangerous to British manufactures if England should permit her coal to be purchased by the Germans or the French, lest they should use it in manufacturing articles that might compete in their own markets, and in others with those of Great Britain. And now a Protectionist ministry proposed to abolish this time-honored incubus. Sir Robert Peel plunged fearlessly into the deep sea of economics, and declared that in his opinion the repealed taxes, by the stimulus they would give to commerce, would so far increase the general prosperity of the country as to counterbalance the continuance of the income tax. "All classes of the country," he said, "whether agricultural, manufacturing or commercial, and parties not engaged in any particular industry would be either

directly or indirectly benefited by the plans he now proposed." There was great cheering when Sir Robert Peel sat down, but it came not from his own party, but from the Free Trade crowd who occupied the benches opposite. The country gentlemen, the "squires," who cheered themselves into apoplexy last June, now sat silent and enraged; and there were signs of mutiny.

It was arranged that the proposals of Sir Robert Peel should be discussed on Monday, and on that evening they were subjected to a running fire of criticism from several members, many of whom, however, acknowledged that they could not vote against them. The chief debater on the opposition side was Lord John Russell. He objected to the income tax, because it led to vexation and fraud, and declared that nothing but a great emergency could justify its imposition. He then declared himself opposed to all protective duties of every kind. "It is the business of government," he said, "to make laws for repressing crime, preserving order, and defending the state, but not for meddling with the right of the citizen to dispose of his labor and of the products of his industry in the best market." He was in favor of a short income tax, and a total abandonment of all monopoly.

Sir Robert Peel remarked that it would be ungracious in him to say much in reply to those who were about to support him in the most eloquent of all ways, namely, by their votes.



Lord John Russell surprised him by denouncing the income tax, and then saying he would vote for it. Perhaps the noble Lord felt that he might be on the ministerial benches himself a couple of years from now, and that then £5,000,000 derived from the income tax would be a grateful sum to deal with. Little did Sir Robert Peel suppose that this banter contained a prophesy that was literally fulfilled. In a couple of years Lord John Russell actually was on the ministerial benches, and then he did find that the income tax was a very useful thing to have on hand. The strength of Sir Robert Peel's command over both parties in the House may be imagined from the fact that although nearly everybody denounced the income tax, only thirty members had the nerve to vote against it; the Prime Minister's demand that it should be imposed for another term of three years was granted by a majority of 228 against 30.

Although a great reduction in the sugar duties was made in the new tariff, the discrimination in favor of the British West Indies was still preserved. The false reason given for this was the discouragement of slavery, the true reason was the "Protection" of the men who owned the plantations in the colonies. Lord John Russell and Mr. Milner Gibson each offered amendments to Peel's plan, in which they declared for an equalization of the duty on foreign and colonial sugar. They were easily defeated although they had the best of the debate. Lord John Russell and Mr. Labouchere

exposed the inconsistency of the anti-slavery pretext, because the government was very careful not to apply it to other things. Mr. Gladstone answered them, and although he was now out of office, he defended the government plan with his usual eloquence. He reminded the House of the great sacrifices it had made to obtain the extinction of slavery, and pointed out the inconsistency of placing cruisers on the coast of Africa to prevent the exportation of negroes to Cuba and Brazil, and at the same time giving by our fiscal policy such encouragement to the planters of those countries to produce a greater quantity of sugar as would induce them to obtain slaves at all hazards. Mr. Macaulay replied to Gladstone, and said he would not have two standards of right and wrong, nor strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. "This," he said, "is what you are doing." He then showed that Sir Robert Peel at the very moment in which he debarred the country from the importation of Brazilian sugar, because it was slave grown, took off all the duty on American cotton which was slave grown also. Sir Robert Peel defended the inconsistency of the government, and the opposition was put to sleep by a majority of ninety-four against Lord John Russell's amendment.

On the 10th of March, Mr. Cobden brought on his motion for a select committee to inquire into the causes of agricultural distress. He contended that the Corn-Laws were an injury instead of a

benefit to the farmers and farm laborers, and this he would be prepared to show if they would grant him the committee. On the part of the government Mr. Sidney Herbert, a young patrician of great fortune and family, was chosen to reply to Cobden. He was of the lineage of Sir Philip Sidney, and brother of the Earl of Pembroke. He was a high Tory, and was credited with more talent than usually belonged to men of his rank and fortune. He held office in Peel's government as Secretary of the Admiralty. There was nothing remarkable about his speech except that it contained an honest and unlucky expression which greatly offended his party. After stating positively that Mr. Cobden's motion would be met on the part of the government by a decided negative, he remarked that the agriculturists were a body of men with very susceptible nerves, easily excited to alarm. By granting the committee a notion would go abroad that the government had an intention to alter the Corn-Laws. It was somewhat distasteful to him as a member of the agricultural body to be always coming to Parliament "*whining for Protection.*"

That last phrase probably fell from him in a peevish moment when his tongue was not well enough guarded. It gave great offense, and a good deal of alarm. Nothing that had fallen from Cobden had such a sting in it, for this was the language of contempt. The imperious demand of the landed aristocracy for protection to agri-



culture, was described in a patrician sneer as "whining;" and this, too, in a speech answering Cobden. It suggested more than it said; it indicated that the Tory government itself had become tired of wet-nursing and dry-nursing all the wheezy "interests" that claimed legislative support. Had the insult come from any of the Free Trade party it might have been endured; but to come from one of themselves, a wealthy landlord, an aristocrat, and a Tory, was a humiliation hard to bear, especially as Mr. Sidney Herbert had lately, at a public meeting, declared himself a firm adherent of the Protective System, and had fiercely assailed the League. The phrase "whining for Protection," immediately passed into the colloquial slang of politics.

The Tory mutiny broke out in the early days of March, but so strong was Peel, first, in the success of his ministerial policy, secondly, in the weakness and division of the Whigs, and thirdly, in the fears of his own party that if they lost him somebody worse for them would take his place, that the insurrection was easily suppressed. The mutiny appeared in the shape of a motion of Mr. Miles to the effect "that in the application of surplus revenue towards relieving the burdens of the country, by reduction of taxation, due regard should be had to the necessity of affording relief to the agricultural interest." In his remarks upon that resolution Mr. Miles distinctly told his chief that if the Tories had known what was coming



they would have beaten him in 1842. The loud cheering from the Protectionists which greeted this posthumous threat, showed Peel that although by the duress of the situation they were compelled to give him their votes, their sympathies were with the mutineers, and not with the commanding officer. The resolution was seconded by the Earl of March, son and heir of the Duke of Richmond, and present possessor of that title. In supporting it, Mr. Disraeli made a showy and somewhat theatrical display. His speech was received with uproarious cheering by the Tories, and it really deserved all the applause. There were many smart things in it, although they all smelt of the lamp, and bore evidence of careful study and preparation. The personal allusions to Peel were steeped in vitriol. That statesman had always underrated Mr. Disraeli, and still underrated him. He maintained his air of superiority all through, but the poisoned sarcasms wounded him like a shower of needles. In this phillipic occurs the sentence that afterwards became famous, and a Tory rallying cry; the sentence in which Mr. Disraeli denounced the administration as "an organized hypocrisy." Sir Robert Peel kept his temper, and in reply contrasted Mr. Disraeli's former flatteries with his present vituperation. With an air of disdain he said that he held his panegyrics and attacks in the same estimation. The rebellion was crushed by a majority of 213 to 78.

In this very lively debate the government still proclaimed its adherence to the Protective System. Sir James Graham, Secretary of State, while opposing the resolution of Mr. Miles, declared that the principle of Protection should be and ought to be preserved in the economic legislation of the country, and Lord John Russell followed him with an emphatic declaration on the other side. He advised the protected classes to rely henceforth upon their energy, their industry, and their capital, as the true sources of prosperity, and not upon the broken reed of "legislative protection." Sir Robert Peel made a very careful speech. He thought extreme Protection wrong, and defended moderate Protection as "necessary, not on principles of commercial policy, but as essential to a state of things where great interests had grown up, and whose injury would be that of the community at large."

The student of American politics may wisely study this apology of Sir Robert Peel. He will hear it often in the "impending conflict" in the United States between Protection and Free Trade. Sir Robert Peel himself stigmatised his own reasoning as unsound on "principles of commercial policy," but "great interests had grown up" under the stimulus of "Protection," and if the artificial prop which supported those great interests should be removed, they would fall to the ground; and the people who were living on them would receive injury. That the withdrawal of Protec-

tion would be an injury to the protected classes was true, but that it would be an injury to the community at large was false. The community at large, being taxed for the benefit of a class, he pretended that the removal of the tax would be an injury, not only to those who received it, but to those who paid it. This absurdity is flippantly maintained by the American Protectionists even now.

This position of Sir Robert Peel is a lesson and a warning to us. It shows that no matter under what circumstances of pretended urgency "Protection" may be conceded, the protected class is never ready to surrender it. The rack-renting Morrill tariff of 1861, which Mr. Morrill himself declared at that time could only be defended as a "war measure" by the urgency of our situation, is now, twenty years after the war, impudent and rapacious. Mr. Morrill will not permit a hair of its head to be injured. He is willing to take it out of politics, and refer it to a "commission" of its friends with instructions to report in the language of Sir Robert Peel, that its preservation has become "essential to a state of things where great interests have grown up, whose injury would be that of the community at large."

Late in May Lord John Russell's plan was given to the country. It consisted of nine resolutions which the Whig leader presented to Parliament in a speech which was easily and successfully answered by Peel. These resolutions were



intended to constitute a new platform for the Whigs. Had they been proclaimed before the opening of Parliament they would have been regarded as so liberal and far advanced that they might have embarrassed both the Tories and the League; but coming after Peel's budget, they were of no more interest than nine old newspapers. Like some other political parties that might be mentioned, the Whigs came limping along behind their enemies. Of the nine resolutions this history is only concerned with two. The second resolution was, "That those laws which impose duties usually called protective tend to impair the efficiency of labor, to restrict the free interchange of commodities, and so impose upon the people unnecessary taxation."

It took the League six long years to pound those principles into Lord John Russell. He had adopted them at last, and it must be acknowledged that in making his confession to the House of Commons he had managed to condense a vast amount of economic truth into a very few sentences. The wonderful fact remains that he was not yet ready to apply those principles to corn. The third resolution was, "That the present Corn-Law tends to check improvements in agriculture, produces uncertainty in all farming speculations, and holds out to the owners and occupiers of land prospects of special advantage which it fails to secure."

And yet he was not ready to vote for a repeal of



that law. He merely wanted to change the "sliding scale" for a fixed duty. He confessed, however, that after all the discussion which had taken place, he could not reasonably and fairly propose the eight shillings fixed duty which he had offered in 1841. He thought that a duty of four, five, or six shillings a quarter would be about right. The League had made him a Free Trader as to everything but corn; and as to that, it had crowded him back from eight shillings a quarter, to six, or five, or even four. Lord John Russell had the Whigs and Free Traders with him on the division, but was easily beaten by a majority of seventy-eight.

In June came on again the annual motion of Mr. Villiers for a total repeal of the Corn-Laws. It was in the form of three resolutions:

1. That the Corn-Law restricts the supply of food, and prevents the free exchange of the products of labor.

2. That it is, therefore, prejudicial to the welfare of the country, especially to that of the working classes, and has proved delusive to those for whose benefit the law was designed.

3. That it is expedient that all restrictions on the importation of corn should be now abolished.

The debate on the resolutions revealed the new position taken by Lord John Russell. He gave his unqualified support to the first and second resolutions, but was not ready to vote for the third. The Whig leaders were still beguiled by a

fantastic will-o'-the-wisp, seducing them into the slough of compromise. They cherished the delusion that in the break up of parties which was coming, many fragments might be cemented to the Whigs by a concession to Protection of a moderate duty upon grain, and by a concession to Free Trade of a tariff for revenue only as to all other things. But the time for compromise had passed, and principles now stood arrayed against each other in "irrepressible conflict." Lord John Russell echoed Villiers and Cobden. He charged that the legislators maintained the existing law, because it added to their own incomes; and he declared that they had failed in their attempts to prove that it was beneficial to the rest of the community.

The debate also disclosed the change that had come over Sir James Graham in three months. He no longer contended for Protection as a principle, but merely for cautious and prudent legislation in dealing with it. He seemed to plead that the doomed culprit might have a long time to prepare for death. He admitted that by prudent measures they might bring the Corn-Laws nearer to the sound principles of commerce; but he hoped that no sudden step would be taken. He very much feared a "shock" to the agricultural interest, because it would convulse all other branches of industry. He feared that the free importation of corn would throw land out of cultivation, inflicting great injury on parts of England,

and on the whole of Ireland. Still, if he thought that free importation was the only way in which to supply sufficient food to an increasing population, he would not oppose it any longer. Unfortunately, Sir James Graham was in the situation of Mr. Gladstone; he too had written a book, and its doctrines were continually tripping him up. The principles laid down by him in his work on "Corn and Currency" were very inconvenient to him now, and his opponents made the most of his embarrassment. He never flinched, however, but took his punishment in a very manly way. Wherever he differed from his book he courageously acknowledged that his opinions had undergone a change. Mr. Bright answered Sir James Graham. He accused him of dealing in fallacies, and referred to the Free Trade Bazaar at Covent Garden Theatre as evidence that the Free Trade agitation outside Parliament was vigorous and increasing.

There were several speeches made on both sides. Lord Ebrington, a Whig nobleman of some importance, declared that he should vote for the resolutions. He had formerly opposed them because he hoped that a fixed duty would have formed a compromise between the two great interests of the country. He now despaired of any such compromise, and would give his hearty support to the resolutions. Mr. Cobden made a vigorous attack upon the present system. He declared that the condition of the laboring classes was a



disgrace to the country, and he maintained that it was an act of injustice to tax the food of the people. This question, he said, had never been fairly met with argument in the House of Commons, and he ventured to predict that it never would be fairly met.

The most remarkable thing about this debate was the towering air of superiority with which Sir Robert Peel lectured the pack behind him. With lordly patronage he told them that although he was about to lead them to victory once more their arguments were unsound. He distinctly stated that although he must vote against the motion of Mr. Villiers, he could not agree in all the arguments adduced against it. He formally repudiated and laid aside the mistake of the Protectionists, that dear commodities make high wages, and although some of his own followers had proclaimed the doctrine in that very debate, he told them it was not true. The Protectionists bore this lecture with such patience as they could, but when their leader told them that he opposed the motion, not because it was not right, but because he desired to make "a gradual approach to sound principles with a cautious attention to the interests which had grown up under a different system," they could scarce conceal their anger. They very well understood that he meant by "sound principles" the doctrines of Free Trade. To be told, not only that their arguments were bad, but also that their principles were not sound,



was more than they could bear. The division was taken mechanically, and the speaker announced that the Noes had it by 254 to 122, a little more than two to one. This was the last victory for the Protectionists in England. Parliament adjourned in August. When it met again in January, the Tory party had been disintegrated and broken to pieces by the League; the Protectionists were disorganized and routed so completely that they were never afterwards known as a party in the politics of Great Britain.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### AT LAST, FAMINE.

The Bad Harvest of 1845—The Potato Disease—Anxiety of Sir Robert Peel—Correspondence With Sir James Graham—Sends a Scientific Commission to Ireland—Cabinet Councils—Discord Therein—Lord John Russell's Letter to the Electors of London—Ministerial Crisis—Resignation of the Ministry—Lord John Russell Fails to Form a Government—Return of Sir Robert Peel to Power—Activity of the League—Great Public Meetings—Reconstruction of the Cabinet.

AND now the time was close at hand when that boasted Protective System which was to make Britain "independent of foreign countries" for its food supply was to be subjected to a test it could not stand. In the summer of 1845 Mr. Cobden had ridiculed that precarious commercial system which was at the mercy of a shower of rain. "Three weeks rainy weather," he said, "will prove the danger of leaving the industrial scheme of such a country as England to stand or fall on the cast of a die." He had scarcely ceased to speak when the rainy weather came, and it lasted through the harvest time. The wheat crop was short, and its quality was poor. It was not so short, however, as to create any alarm, or affect the politics of the country. No uneasiness was

felt until the middle of August, when it was rumored that the potato crop had been smitten with a strange disease, and that the potatoes in the south of England were rotting in the ground. While this occasioned some anxiety to the government, and was the cause of some correspondence between Sir Robert Peel and Sir James Graham, it was not until the middle of September that the Ministers became alarmed; for although the reports were contradictory, as in all such cases, yet enough was known to satisfy Sir Robert Peel that the rot was extensive and even general throughout England; and there was a horrid whisper creeping about that the crop had also been smitten in Ireland. This was more alarming still, for the potato constituted the principal food of the Irish peasantry. In a letter written by Sir James Graham to Sir Robert Peel, from Netherby, in the north, and dated September the 19th, 1845, he says, "I hope there may be some exaggeration in this report of the failure of the potato crop in Ireland; but there is no doubt that to some extent the disease has made its appearance in that country. We had again a great deal of rain yesterday; and the weather is broken and no longer favorable."

In October the reports grew worse, and men all over England were cursing between their teeth that governmental system which had made the Irish people dependent on a wretched root for food. So far from being "independent of foreign

countries," the people of the British Islands saw themselves in the autumn of 1845 almost at the mercy of other nations for their coming winter's bread. Sir Robert Peel vibrated between hope and despair. In his own memoirs he says, "Even so late as the 6th of October the accounts from Ireland were not decidedly unfavorable, and on that day Sir James Graham, writing from Netherby, observes, 'the accounts of the potato crop in Ireland are more favorable than I had ventured to expect. The recent terrible rains will still do no harm. I am afraid that the price of food generally will be very high.' Soon after the 6th of October the reports from Ireland became very unsatisfactory." On the 13th of October, Sir Robert Peel addressed a letter to Sir James Graham, in which he says, "The accounts of the potato crop in Ireland are becoming very alarming." The letter concludes with the following important paragraph, "I have no confidence in such remedies as the prohibition of exports, or the stoppage of the distilleries. The removal of impediments to imports is the only effectual remedy." This proves that Sir Robert Peel had made up his mind as early as the 13th of October. But he was the leader of a stubborn and stupid party, nearly all opposed to him; and he was at the head of a Cabinet, every member of which was a Protectionist, from education, from prejudice, and from self-interest. He seems to have had but one sympathizing friend in his own Cabinet; but one



man with whom he could hold confidential counsel amid the awful responsibilities and dangers which were rapidly closing around him. That was Sir James Graham, Secretary of State for the Home Department. Between Sir James Graham and his chief there appears to have been a kindred feeling of responsibility, and a mutual willingness to do whatever ought to be done, regardless of consequences merely personal to themselves.

In the middle of October Sir Robert Peel sent a commission of scientific men to Ireland with instructions to investigate and report upon the potato disease, so that he might act upon correct information. This must have been rather to influence and satisfy his colleagues than for his own information. He was already satisfied, and had determined what to do. On the 15th of October he wrote to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland as follows, "The accounts from Ireland of the potato crop, confirmed as they are by your high authority, are very alarming. We must consider whether it is possible by legislation, or by the exercise of prerogative, to apply a remedy to the great evil with which we are threatened. The application of such remedy involves considerations of the utmost magnitude. The remedy is the removal of all impediments to the import of all kinds of human food—that is, the total and absolute repeal for ever of all duties on all articles of subsistence." On the 27th of October, in a letter to Sir James Graham, Sir Robert Peel, said,

“The Anti-Corn-Law pressure is about to commence, and it will be the most formidable movement of modern times. Everything depends upon the skill, promptitude, and decision with which it is met.”

Sir Robert Peel was right. The League had now become almost irresistible. A large portion of the press which had long held aloof from it gave in their adhesion, not only to its doctrines, but to its plans. It held great meetings and made many converts. It caused petitions to be circulated throughout the country demanding the immediate repeal of the Corn-Laws. These were signed by thousands. Mr. O’Connell, who had long been a member of the League, sent fearful accounts from Ireland, and demanded a cessation of party conflict in the presence of the calamity that was impending over the country. He called upon the government to open the ports to the admission of foreign grain. Sir Robert Peel felt the fearful weight of his responsibility, and there were frequent meetings of the Cabinet, but the people knew nothing of its discussions except that they were not harmonious.

The first Cabinet Council to consider the subject was held on the 31st of October. It met again the next day, and then Sir Robert Peel laid before it a memorandum of the situation, and of the remedies that he thought ought to be adopted. After explaining why the Cabinet had been called together, and laying before it all the information

he had received concerning the condition of the country, he proposed, first, that the ports should be opened to the admission of foreign grain by an order in council, trusting that Parliament would pass an act of indemnity excusing the Ministers for this unconstitutional suspending of a law; secondly, to call Parliament together not later than the 27th of November, and leave the whole matter to its decision. He gave the arguments for and against both plans, and frankly declared his opinion that if the ports were once opened, even for temporary relief, they could never be closed again. The Cabinet separated without coming to any opinion, and agreed to meet again on the 6th of November, to determine what policy should be adopted

On the 6th of November the Cabinet met again, but not even the reasoning of Peel could move it from a stolid, selfish conservatism. The proposals of the Prime Minister were supported by only three members—the Earl of Aberdeen, Sir James Graham, and Mr. Sidney Herbert. “The other members of the Cabinet,” remarks Peel, “some on the ground of objection to the principle of the measures recommended, others upon the ground that there was not sufficient evidence of the necessity for them, withheld their sanction.” This, he says, would have justified him then in relinquishing office, but fearing that the dissolution of the government would excite the public mind, he determined to retain office for the



present, and give the Cabinet until the last of the month to consider the whole question. "In determining to retain office for the present," he said, "I determined also, not to recede from the position I had taken, and ultimately to resign office if I should find on the re-assembling of the Cabinet that the opinions I had expressed did not meet with general concurrence.

The discord in the Cabinet looked like an opportunity for the Whigs, and they thought to make party capital out of it. This does not mean that they did not also think that it gave them an opportunity to be of real service to the country. Lord John Russell was in Edinburgh quietly watching the progress of events. He saw that there was a division in the Cabinet. How wide it was he did not know, but he thought that it was probably wide enough to let him pass through it, and return once more to power. All through November the political gloom grew deeper, and at last he thought that his time had come. He was member for the city of London, and on the 22d of November he wrote from Edinburgh a letter to his constituents on the condition of the country. It was written somewhat in a party spirit, and reflected severely upon the Ministry, and especially upon Peel; but the people did not notice that; all they noticed was the more important fact that he had gone bodily over to the League, and declared himself in favor of Free Trade. He confessed that he had been converted from the



errors of a lifetime. "I used to be of the opinion," he said, "that corn was an exception to the general rules of political economy." Observation and experience had at last convinced him of the expensive folly of the whole Protective System. He said, "Let us, then, unite to put an end to a system which has proved to be the blight of commerce, the bane of agriculture, the source of bitter divisions among classes, the cause of penury, fever, mortality, and crime among the people."

This letter meant that the Whigs had got off the fence; and presently they were seen tumbling over one another in their haste to join the League. It precipitated the crisis, and broke up the Ministry. As soon as it appeared Sir Robert Peel called the Cabinet together. He told his Ministers that he could not any longer assume the responsibility of continuing the Corn-Laws; he proposed to open the ports by an order in council, and declared himself in favor of Free Trade. On the 25th of November the council met, and on the 26th Sir Robert Peel laid before it a memorandum in which he said, "I am prepared for one to take the responsibility of suspending the law by an order in council, or of calling Parliament at a very early period, and advising in the speech from the throne, the suspension of the law." On the 29th of November he forwarded to each member of the Cabinet another memorandum containing the whole argument on the case, but they were not convinced. In answer to it the

Duke of Wellington said, "I am one of those who think the continuance of the Corn-Laws essential to the agriculture of the country in its existing state, and particularly to that of Ireland, and a benefit to the whole community." He thought, however, that a good government for the country was of more consequence than the Corn-Laws. He thought that the government was safer in the hands of Peel than it would be elsewhere, and agreed to stand by him in any policy that he might think proper to adopt. He said, "In respect to my own course, my only object in public life is to support Sir Robert Peel's administration of the government."

Mr. Goulburn, Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his answer to Peel's memorandum, said, "I wish to consider protection to agriculture precisely as I would protection to manufactures; for agriculture, after all, is a manufacture, of which the raw material is earth, and the manufactured article is corn." As the American Protectionist to-day makes the public debt an excuse for the imposition of protective taxes, so did Mr. Goulburn then. He said, "From the immense amount of our debt, and the charge imposed on every interest in the country in respect to it, every manufacturer in this country has in justice a claim to be protected as regards the supply of the home consumer against the competition of a foreigner, who, not having the same charges upon him, is, or ought to be able to supply articles at a cheaper

rate." Here Mr. Goulburn concealed the fact, or else he did not know it, that this protection given to the manufacturer to help him bear the burden of the public debt, was given at the expense of other classes of the people, who, in addition to this protective tax, were also compelled to bear their share of the public debt. This concession to the manufacturers, however, was only a pretext for demanding a larger protection for the agriculturists. He goes on to say, "On this ground you give linen, cotton, and woollen manufacturers a protection of from 10 to 20 per cent., and to this extent on the same ground I see no reason why corn should not be protected." He then proceeds to argue that for peculiar reasons corn should have "an extra protection."

Lord Wharncliffe, in his answer to the memorandum, said that in his opinion no case was made out *as yet* that would justify the government in taking the action proposed by Sir Robert Peel. He thought that the government "could not consistently propose such measures to Parliament as in their conscience they must feel to be, not only an abandonment of the present Corn-Law, but of the principle of Protection." He argued strongly against a Free Trade policy. Lord Wharncliffe was an old man, scarcely able to endure the strain of the present excitement, and in ten days after writing that letter he died. Lord Stanley was firm in his resistance to the changes recommended by the Prime Minister.

The discussions in the Cabinet continued from day to day until the 5th of December. Some of the younger Tories were willing to go with Peel, but Lord Stanley and the Duke of Buccleugh could not consent to overthrow the Corn-Laws, which in some shape or other had taxed the people of England for hundreds of years. The clamor of the League could be heard in the council chamber, and rather than endure it any longer the whole Ministry resigned. Sir Robert Peel, speaking of this last Cabinet Council, says, "Lord Stanley and the Duke of Buccleugh, after anxious reflection, each signified his inability to support a measure involving the ultimate repeal of the Corn-Laws. All the other members were prepared to support such a measure. I could not, however, conceal from myself that the assent given by many was a reluctant one—that it was founded rather on a conviction of the public evil that must arise from the dissolution of the government at such a time and from such a cause, than on the deliberate approval of the particular course which I urged upon their adoption." For these reasons the Ministry was broken up, and Sir Robert went down to Osborne, and handed his resignation to the Queen.

Lord John Russell was sent for to form an administration. He accepted the task, and there was a great deal of "mounting in hot haste," and "hurrying to and fro," and sending for this man and for that man. Although Lord John Russell had



obtained the promise of Sir Robert Peel that he would support his government in carrying out a policy in accordance with the measures advocated in the Edinburgh letter, he found himself unable to form an administration. After a couple of weeks tinkering with the "crisis," he went down and told the Queen that he had failed in his attempt to form a government. He confessed in the language of *Punch*, who was making fun of him at the time, that he was not "big enough for the place."

When Lord John Russell was making up the "slate," he offered the greatest man in England, the author of the commercial revolution, a subordinate position as Vice-President of the Board of Trade, under a titled mediocrity, the Earl of Clarendon, who was to be President of the Board. This was a good deal like offering Oliver Cromwell a Corporalship under the Earl of Essex. So hard was it for the Whig aristocracy to understand that the democracy of England had at last become a power in the state. Of course Cobden declined the offer, not because the office was not big enough for him, but because he never sought official distinction of any kind.

It was not to be regretted that Lord John Russell failed to form a government. Had he succeeded, he would probably have subordinated the mighty question of the hour to the exigencies of party. There was but one man who was equal to the occasion; who had the tact, ability, and

temper, the scientific knowledge, the character, and the parliamentary following to carry England safely through. That man was Peel. Lord John Russell advised the Queen to send for him again, and place the government in his hands once more. Sir Robert resumed his office, and proceeded to reconstruct his Cabinet. Most of the old members agreed to serve under him again. Among the new members was Gladstone. Even the Duke of Wellington, whose Tory prejudices were so bitter and so strong, agreed to take office under Peel once more, and promised to stand by him till the fight was ended. It is proof of the confidence of the people in Peel's capacity, that as soon as it was known that he had consented to resume his office the funds rose.

The average estimate of Peel as a leader and a statesman may be gathered from the following extract, taken from a London journal of great popularity. The article was published immediately after the fall of the ministry, and before it was known that Peel would again be called to power. The article is a severe criticism on Peel's conduct in proposing measures directly antagonistic to the principles on which his government was formed. After showing that with the present Parliament a Whig ministry is impossible, it searches the Tory ranks for a new leader to take the place of Peel. It acknowledges that it cannot find one, and says, "If a Tory Cabinet cannot be constructed, it is a fatal sign for the party. It is in this respect that

the prospects of the Tory party are the most unsatisfactory. It is impossible to say what men occasion and opportunity may not bring forth, but at present there is neither an equal nor a successor to Peel.

. . . . Another of his fathom have they not  
To lead their business.

Stanley would seem the approximate leader; but he is wanting in temper. Graham would not do, for he has been both a Whig and a Corn-Law repealer. Gladstone is beyond all question the most able man in the ranks of the party, but is implicated in the tariff, and committed to commercial liberality as deeply as Peel. Taking the many qualifications that Sir Robert Peel possesses, combined with his position and influence, the man does not exist who can supply his place completely." This from a hostile critic is a fair criterion of the estimation in which Peel was regarded by his countrymen at that time. It must be remembered that Peel never was a popular man in the sense of popularity as we understand it in America. A man of great wealth and aristocratic education, owing nothing to the people, and absolutely independent, he neither courted them nor flattered them. He could say more truthfully than any man in England,

I love the people,  
But do not like to stage me to their eyes,  
Though it do well; I do not relish well,  
Their loud applause and aves vehement,  
Nor do I think the man of safe discretion  
That does affect it.

All this time the League was pressing its advantage; it faltered not. Immense meetings were held in London, Manchester, and other places. At a great meeting in Dublin, Mr. O'Connell proclaimed "every man an enemy who did not support Bright and Cobden." He said, "Why should we not support the abolition of the Corn-Laws? Do they make wages high? Certainly not, but they gave a fictitious value to land. In the county of Kilkenny he had enquired the rate of wages, and found that it was only 1s and 6d per week." He denounced the government for not opening the ports. On the 15th of December a vast Free Trade meeting was held at Guildhall, the City Hall of London, which was presided over by the Lord Mayor himself, in his official character as chief magistrate of the city. The mighty giants, Gog and Magog, who had guarded London for a thousand years and more, were nearly shaken from their pedestals by the cheers that went up when Cobden rose to speak. He was in great spirits that day, for he knew that the end was near. One of the speakers at the meeting was Mr. Perkins, who, in proposing one of the resolutions, made the following remarks which look very curious to us now, "The Peel administration," said Mr. Perkins, "is afraid to face the speech of the President of the United States which will arrive in this country within the next ten days. The Western States of America have now a majority in Congress, and they never will meet this country on terms of amicable feeling and mutual



interests until they have free access to the markets of this country."

Mr. Cobden was the chief speaker of the occasion, and he was received with immense applause. He was in his most sarcastic vein. Referring to the break-up of the Cabinet, he said, "The Protection societies tell us confidently that there is a sufficient supply of corn and potatoes in the country. If this is so, what is the matter at headquarters? If there is no potato rot, what is that murrain which we have got in the Cabinet?" "It is easy," said Mr. Cobden, "for our Dukes and Squires, maundering like old women at agricultural meetings, to say there is no scarcity, and to attempt to arrest the opinion in favor of Free Trade. They can go out to hunt and shoot during the day, and when they come in they can regale themselves with venison, champagne, and the like dainties. With them there is no scarcity; not so with the people."

Two days afterwards there was a great meeting at Covent Garden Theatre. Thirty thousand tickets of admission were applied for. Mr. Villiers presided, and speeches were made by Mr. Cobden, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Fox. But London was excelled by Manchester. At one meeting there it was resolved to raise twelve hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the League, and three hundred thousand dollars was contributed that day. Twenty-three men subscribed five thousand dollars each as fast as the secretary could write their

names. Nothing could stand against such earnest public opinion as that. The counter-meetings got up by the Agricultural Protection Society were so weak and spiritless that they only served to make more apparent the invincible power of the League. Badly educated and ill-informed old Dukes mumbled out complaints against the League, and scolded Sir Robert Peel for deserting them. At one of those Protection meetings, the Duke of Richmond, in spite of the fact that the League had mastered both Russell and Peel, said, "The Anti-Corn-Law League is of no power at all unless it be led by men like Sir Robert Peel and Lord John Russell." These old dukes displayed such deplorable ignorance, and made such comical blunders whenever they spoke, that they helped the League immensely, and furnished great sport for Cobden who would rather go gunning for dukes than dukes would for pheasants. At one meeting the Duke of Norfolk brought the whole peerage into ridicule by recommending curry powder as a remedy for the public distress. He had discovered that an excellent thing to make the laborer warm and comfortable in a time of hunger was "a pinch of curry powder in a quantity of hot water," and the Duke of Cambridge made great amusement by innocently doubting the stories about the potato disease, because, "really he hadn't noticed anything wrong with the potatoes that were furnished his own table."

On the 20th of December, Sir Robert Peel, in an

interview with the Queen, at Windsor, consented to assume once more the office of Prime Minister. That evening he returned to London, and immediately summoned his old Cabinet to a council in Downing street. It was late at night before they got together, and this time Sir Robert met them not as a colleague, nor even as their official chief, but as their master. He informed them at once that he had not summoned them for the purpose of deliberating on what was to be done, but for the purpose of announcing to them that he was again Prime Minister, and whether supported or not, was firmly resolved to meet Parliament as Minister, and to propose such measures as the public exigencies required. Failure or success must depend upon their decision; but nothing could shake his determination to meet Parliament, and to advise the speech from the throne. As their advice on public questions was not asked, there was nothing for them to decide upon but the personal question whether or not they would resume their offices as the ministers of Peel, and promise to support the changes in the revenue, and economic systems of the country which he intended to recommend to Parliament. They all agreed to serve under his command again, except Lord Stanley and the Duke of Buccleugh. Lord Stanley positively declined to re-enter the Cabinet, and the Duke of Buccleugh requested time to consider, which was granted him. At the end of a couple of days he gave in his adhesion to his old

chief and the new policy. He resumed his place in the Cabinet, and agreed to support the measures of Peel. For fifteen years a superstition had prevailed among the Tories that nobody but Peel was competent to govern England. The strong hold it had upon them was now apparent when the Duke of Wellington, the Duke of Buccleugh, the Earl of Aberdeen, and men of that character yielded their individuality to him once more, and agreed to support measures they had always opposed, believing them to be essential to the welfare of the country, because Peel said so.



## CHAPTER XV.

### THE REFORMED SYSTEM.

The Reconstructed Ministry—Opening of Parliament—Ominous Words from the Throne—The Duke of Richmond Attacks the Ministry—Peel Abandons the Protective Policy—Advocates a Tariff for Revenue Only—His Great Speech—Raw Materials—The Corn-Laws Doomed—Lord Beaconsfield on Peel's Speech—His Command over the House of Commons.

AT the beginning of 1846 the public mind of England was in a feverish condition. Business was good, but there was great anxiety about the scarcity of food. The contradictory reports on that subject increased the excitement instead of allaying it. Those in favor of changes and reforms were accused of exaggerating the reports about the failure of the crops, while the other side were charged with concealing the extent of the calamity. The relations between England and the United States were unfriendly and even war-like because of the Oregon dispute, and the proceedings of Congress were watched with deep concern. The break-up of the Cabinet was a disturbing cause, and although it was known that Sir Robert Peel would propose some changes in the commercial policy of the country, yet nobody knew what the changes would be. To create a public opinion strong enough to compel him to a

radical repeal of the Corn-Laws became the object of the League, and to that end immense meetings were held in all parts of the Kingdom. On the other hand, the Protection societies held counter meetings, and tried to create a rival agitation, in order to restrain the Prime Minister and keep him to a conservative policy. In this contest the League had a great advantage both in the largeness of its gatherings and in the vigor and ability of its speakers. It was always on the aggressive while the Protection orators were always on the defensive. The League courted discussion, while the Protection societies avoided it. At a meeting of the Protection society, held at Wolverhampton, it was distinctly stated that discussion would not be allowed, and the "noble chairman," the Earl of Sandwich, said that only on that condition had he consented to take the chair. It is easy to see that meetings like that did more injury to their own side than to the other.

In this nervous condition of the country the Queen opened Parliament on the 20th of January, 1846. The speech from the throne foreshadowed what was coming. It contained these ominous words:

"I have had great satisfaction in giving my assent to the measures which you have presented to me from time to time, calculated to extend commerce, and to stimulate domestic skill and industry by the repeal of prohibitory, and the relaxation of Protective duties."

“I recommend you to take into your early consideration whether the principles on which you have acted may not with advantage be yet more extensively applied, and whether it may not be in your power, after a careful review of the existing duties upon many articles, the produce or manufacture of other countries, to make such further reductions and remissions as may tend to ensure the continuance of the great benefits to which I have adverted, and by enlarging our commercial intercourse, to strengthen the bonds of amity with foreign powers.”

In the House of Lords the mover and seconder of the address in answer to the royal speech were listened to with the usual courtesy, and then “Sir Devon, the bull,” proceeded to butt the cars off the track. The Duke of Richmond denounced the anticipated policy of the government, and called upon their lordships not to abandon the Protective System. Referring to the mover of the address, who had asked the House to postpone discussion until they had heard the plans of the government, he said, “I have heard enough to satisfy me what the Minister intends to do. He intends to withdraw Protection.” He then introduced the ancient arguments of the monopolists, that laws which gave them a right to tax their fellow citizens were in the nature of a contract, and could not be repealed. He said, “This is getting rid of the compact which Sir Robert Peel made in 1842 with the agriculturalists, and which

Mr. Gladstone said was made for the purpose of securing to the agriculturists a permanent law. I hope this House will not so far abandon its duty as to be intimidated by the Anti-Corn-Law League, or by the money that body has raised." He then declared that everybody knew that the Protection laws were not for the benefit of one class only, but were for the benefit of every class in the community.

The Duke of Richmond, like many others of the English nobility, had plenty of courage, but little wisdom. He had proved his courage at Waterloo, and at that battle he received a French bullet in his lungs. He was perfectly willing to fight the Free Trade locomotive. Wellington, his old commander, answered him. He told him it was no use trying to stop the train; that the Corn-Laws were sentenced, and that the sentence would be executed in a few days. Still the Duke fought desperately, until old Wellington thought, like Richard, that there must be at least "six Richmonds in the field."

Sir Robert Peel made a short explanation that same night in the House of Commons. In the course of it he said that his opinions on the subject of Protective duties had undergone a change. He was yielding to the force of argument and more enlarged experience. He had closely watched the operation of Protective duties during the past four or five years, and was now convinced that the arguments in favor of their maintenance



were no longer tenable. He was convinced that low wages were not the result of low prices of food. Sir Robert supported this last statement by facts that could not be denied, the rate of wages and the rate of prices that had prevailed during the last six years. He said, "For three years preceding those last past, prices were high while wages were low, while during the past three years, prices were low while wages were high." This was a very uncomfortable statement for those political economists who had been trading on the fallacy that the Protective tariff was necessary in order to secure high wages for the workingman, and that cheap bread and meat, and clothes, meant low wages.

In the year 1884 the National Republican Convention at Chicago performed the paradoxical feat of adopting a high tariff platform, and placing upon it a candidate who is supposed to represent a "spirited foreign policy," which they interpret to mean a policy that will secure for the United States a larger trade with the South American republics, and the empire of Brazil. Thus the candidate is to pull the wagon one way and the platform the other. The party means by "trade" only selling, but not buying, and Mr. Blaine himself in the manifesto published by him in 1882, in explanation of his course as Secretary of State, says that the intention of his policy was, "To cultivate such friendly commercial relations with all American countries as would lead to a

large increase in the *export* trade of the United States, by supplying those fabrics in which we are abundantly able to compete with the manufacturing nations of Europe." The history of England and of our own country shows that this desirable object can only be accomplished in one way, and that is by a reduction of the tariff. This truth had forced itself upon the mind of Sir Robert Peel, by the result of actual experiment. In the explanation which we are now considering, he said, "Since the year 1842, when the first invasion was made on the principle of Protection, the *exports* of the country had risen from £42,000,000 to £47,000,000 in 1843, to £58,000,000 in 1844, and leaving out the trade with China, the increase had been from £42,000,000 in 1842 to £46,000,000 in 1844, and to £56,000,000 in 1845. The results of the revenue presented a similar picture. The state of morality was also a gratifying result of increased prosperity. The commitments throughout the country had enormously decreased." Against a stone wall built up from facts like these the taunts of the Protectionists that Peel had "deserted" and "betrayed" them made little impression, and it was finally agreed that on the next Tuesday the Minister should present his new commercial plans. Peel's was a Free Trade speech, and, as Cobden wrote the next day to a friend, "it would have done for Covent Garden Theatre," the place where the League meetings were held. It was not the speech of a minister

who was yielding to pressure, but of a man who had become convinced. As he said a few nights afterwards, it was the declaration of a man who had become converted to the belief that the Protective System was "was not only unpolitic, but unjust."

Tuesday, January 27th, 1846, was an exciting day in London. Although it was known that on that evening the Prime Minister intended to propose in Parliament a radical change in the commercial policy of England, yet it was not known in detail what the change would be. Although Parliament did not meet until four or five o'clock, crowds of people began to assemble in the neighborhood of the House of Commons as early as one o'clock, and before four o'clock the house itself was crowded in every part. Westminster Hall had not seen so great a multitude since the trial of Warren Hastings, while the open street was densely crowded from Westminster Abbey to Whitehall. The Peer's gallery was crowded full of Dukes, and Earls, and Barons, anxious to learn the fate of those monopolies which their order had enjoyed for centuries. The Duke of Cambridge, the Queen's uncle, was there, and Prince Albert was accommodated with a seat inside the bar. A few nights afterwards his presence there was criticised by Lord George Bentinck, who resented the presence of the Queen's husband within the House of Commons, as an attempt of the Crown to influence the free debates of Parlia-



ment. Some sort of excuse was given by the Court, and the Prince never entered the House again.

Those members who were known to be in favor of Free Trade were loudly cheered, as they were severally recognized, while the Protectionists were received in silence. The Duke of Wellington received a great ovation, for it was known that he had promised Peel to assist him in carrying Free Trade. Although he had opposed every popular movement of his time he was always forgiven because of Waterloo. Near five o'clock, a war of cheering rolling along the street, announced the coming of Sir Robert Peel. As he alighted from his carriage he raised his hat in acknowledgement of the hearty greetings of his countrymen, and passed into the House. He carried a small box in his left hand. It contained the death warrant of the Protective System. In that little box were carefully arranged the details of the new commercial policy, the enlightened system of Free Trade.

About five o'clock Sir Robert Peel rose and moved that the House resolve itself into a committee of the whole on customs and corn importation. The House having resolved itself into committee, Sir Robert began his speech. For three hours the crowd listened to the Minister, as one after another, each protected interest went down to its doom. He gave due notice that while he called upon the agriculturists to resign the protection they had long enjoyed, he should



require the manufacturers to resign theirs also. With just and impartial hand he struck Protection from the linen, the woollen, and the cotton manufacturers, from the iron-workers and the silk-weavers, from the soap-makers and the brass-founders, from the shoemakers and the tanners, from ribbon makers and from hatters, from tin workers and from button-makers, from tailors and from carriage makers, from brewers and from clockmakers, from West India sugar planters and from—almost everybody.

With great candor Sir Robert Peel described the process of his conversion from the errors of Protection to the truths of Free Trade. He quoted some good doctrine from the American Secretary of the Treasury, who had lately said, "By counter-vailing restrictions we injure our own fellow-citizens much more than the foreign nation at whom we purpose to aim their force, and in the conflict of opposing tariffs we sacrifice our own commerce, agriculture, and navigation. Let our commerce be as free as our political institutions. Let us with revenue duties only, open our ports to all the world." Thus among the missionaries who had helped to convert Sir Robert Peel was the American Secretary of the Treasury. Let us hope that the time is not far distant when we shall see another Secretary of the Treasury equally wise.

At the very beginning of his speech Sir Robert Peel laid the foundations of his argument, first,

on the scientific wisdom of the Free Trade theory, and secondly, on the practical results of the experiment of 1842. For three or four years he had patronized Free Trade as a "theory" which might be philosophically correct, but was so hampered and qualified by the accidents of government and actual business, by foreign relations, and local surroundings, as to be of doubtful utility in practical political economy. He had passed out of the region of doubt into the strong light of conviction and now advocated Free Trade as just and wise, not only in theory, but in practice, too. He said, "I am about to proceed on the assumption that the repeal of prohibitory and the relaxation of protective duties is in itself a wise policy—that protective duties abstractedly and on principle are open to objection—I am about to act on this presumption—that during the period of the last three years there has been in this country an increased productiveness of revenue, notwithstanding the relaxation of heavy taxation—that there has been an increased demand for labor; that there has been increased commerce; that there has been increased comfort, content, and peace in this country; and I say that the enjoyment of these benefits has been concurrent with the policy of repealing prohibitory, and reducing protective duties."

This was a strong opening, and it was plain that if he could prove what he said by the facts of commerce, revenue, and wages, the Prime Min-

ister had already made out his case against the Protective System. That he felt confident of his ability to do so was plain from the challenge with which he accompanied his statement. He called upon the opposition to meet him with a counter proposition, viz., "that Protection is in itself a good." He justified the "horizontal" plan on the ground that whatever a man lost by the withdrawal of Protection from his own interest was made up to him by the gain which he received by the withdrawal of Protection from all other interests. He said, "I make no separate and isolated proposals. I have confidence that the proposal for which I contend is just, when I ask all Protectionists to make the sacrifice, if it be a sacrifice, which the application of the principle requires of them." He then referred to the sacrifice he had made of revenue in admitting raw materials free, and said, "In 1844 we reduced altogether the duty upon wool; in 1845 we reduced altogether the duty upon cotton. There hardly remains a raw material imported from other countries upon which the duty has not been reduced. The manufacturers of this country have free access to the raw materials which constitute the fabrics of their manufactures. I am entitled, therefore, I think, to call upon the manufacturer to relax the Protection which he enjoys."

Sir Robert Peel then criticised as unjust and unwise all Protective taxes on the clothing of the

people. He said, "In dealing with the clothing of the great body of the people, I call on the manufacturers of the great articles of cotton, woolen, and linen to relinquish their Protection." He then went into historical argument to prove that the Protective System had originated with the manufacturers, and that the agriculturists had adopted it in self-defense. He quoted Adam Smith as saying, "Country gentlemen and farmers are, to their great honor, of all people the least subject to the wretched spirit of monopoly." This was received with loud laughter and derision by the Free Traders, but Sir Robert with admirable coolness and self-command repeated the quotation, and proceeded thus, "The manufacturers seem to have been the original inventors of those restraints upon the importation of foreign goods which secure to them the monopoly of the home market. It was probably in imitation of them, and to put themselves on a level with those who they found were disposed to oppress them, that the country gentlemen and farmers of Great Britain so far forgot the generosity which is natural to their station, as to demand the exclusive privilege of supplying to their countrymen corn and butcher's meat."

All that was probably ironical on Peel's part, but whether so or not, it was a fair commentary on the Protective System which is a competition of classes to get "level" with one another and something to boot. Lord Beaconsfield, in describ-



ing this remarkable speech, a dozen years afterwards, insinuates that Peel was not ingenuous in making this comparison between the "country gentlemen" and the manufacturers, to the advantage of the former, and that it was only a part of that consummate art by which he managed the House of Commons. Of this part of it Lord Beaconsfield says, "While the agitated agriculture of the United Kingdom awaited with breathless suspense the formal notification of its doom, wondering by what cunning arguments the policy of its betrayer could be palliated; the Minister addressed and pursued at considerable length to the wondering assembly, an elaborate and argumentative statement, the object of which was to reconcile the manufacturers to the deprivation of Protection. Considering that this Protection was merely nominal, the sacrifice did not appear to be too severe, yet the orator seemed scarcely sanguine of inducing his audience to consent to it. With imperturbable gravity the Minister read to the House the passage of Adam Smith in which that eminent writer acknowledges, that 'country gentlemen and farmers are the least subject to the wretched spirit of monopoly,' and fixing, with a sort of mournful reprobation, the manufacturers as the originators of the Protective System in this country, the speaker declared, amid the titter of the Free Traders, which, however, was solemnly reproved, 'that it was but justice that they should set the example of relinquishment.'" ord

Beaconsfield evidently regarded the whole tribute to the country gentlemen as what the boys call "taffy," and had he known the word he would probably have used it. The whole comparison was a sort of soothing chloroform by which Peel endeavored to quiet the country gentlemen while he was pulling their teeth. Whatever import duties remained on the manufactures of cotton and woolen clothing under the proposed new tariff, was limited to the finer fabrics indulged in by the rich alone; on those used by the great body of the people the tax was altogether abolished.

As it is now in the United States, so it was in England then, each protected interest purchased the silence of a rival interest by protecting that also, leaving the great mass of the consumers to bear the burden of the whole tax accumulations; for instance, in order to protect the tanner, government levied a high tariff on tanned leather, and then it bribed the shoemaker and the saddler into acquiescence by levying a similar tariff on saddles and harness, and boots and shoes. Of course, in returning to a correct system, the reverse plan must be adopted, and the reduction of the tax on one must be accompanied by a kindred reduction on the other. Recognizing the force of this, Sir Robert Peel said, "Having remitted the duty on almost every article connected with the tanning process, I propose to remit the duty on dressed hides. There will then not be

one raw material which the manufacturer of leather cannot command without the payment of duty. Having done that I propose to diminish the duty on foreign boots and shoes imported into this country." This was the "horizontal" plan, and it is difficult to see how any other could be either just or wise. To take the tax burthen from leather in one shape, and leave it upon leather in some other shape, would be unstatesmanlike and unfair; and all the taxes upon leather being removed, there was no longer any excuse for permitting the shoemaker to levy taxes upon everybody else, in order to protect his business. Sir Robert Peel applied this principle to hats and other things. Having remitted the duties on the materials of the hat manufacture, he then reduced the duty on hats. He still clung to the delusion that he could make a missionary pulpit of the custom house, and use the tariff schedule as an abolition tract, so, while he reduced the tariff on sugar, he limited the reduction to that grown by free labor. He proposed to punish Brazil, Spain, and the United States for preserving slavery by making a custom house discrimination against their sugar. At last he came to the Corn-Laws, and in the midst of breathless anxiety, he announced that the duties on Indian corn, and on all cattle, vegetables, and other provisions were to cease at once. On wheat, barley, oats, peas, and beans, a small duty would remain for three years, and on the first day of February, 1849, that duty



also was to cease entirely. It is not necessary to go into any further details of an argument which lasted three hours and a quarter, and which concluded amidst great excitement on his own side of the House, and immense cheering on the other.

This was the most important speech delivered in Parliament in modern times; it was fraught with greater consequences to Great Britain than any other, and it was answered by the Tories not with argument, but with personal denunciation of the Minister. Lord Beaconsfield, who was the most virulent and sarcastic of all Peel's enemies, and who came into parliamentary prominence through his poisonous assaults upon him, writing of the speech in 1858, attempts to throw contempt upon it while admitting its power. He says, "But no inability to endure the dread suspense on the part of his former adherents effected the slightest alteration in the tactics which the consummate master had arranged. He had resolved that a considerable time should elapse before they learnt their doom, and that a due impression should be conveyed to the House and to the country that on this night of sacrifices the agricultural classes were not the only victims. And in this he succeeded so well, that, even to this day, controversies are continually arising as to the nature and degree of Protection still retained and enjoyed by the staple manufactures of the country."

Lord Beaconsfield tries to account for the power of a speech he could not answer by pretending



that the success of it was due to the peculiar tactics and management of Peel rather than to any merit in the production itself. He says, "This remarkable man, who in private life was constrained, and often awkward, who could never address a public meeting or make an after-dinner speech without being ill-at-ease, and generally saying something stilted, or even a little ridiculous, in the Senate was the readiest, easiest, most flexible and adroit of men. He played upon the House of Commons as on an old fiddle. And tonight, the manner in which he proceeded to deal with the duties on candles and soap, while all were thinking of the duties on something else; the bland and conciliatory air with which he announced a reduction of the impost on boot fronts and shoe leather, while visions of deserted villages and reduced rentals were torturing his neighbors, were all characteristic of his command over himself, and those whom he addressed."

Again, trying to explain the success of Peel in presenting his new policy to the House of Commons, and the discomfiture of the Protectionists, Lord Beaconsfield, instead of admitting that it was too great for him and his party to answer, impudently pretends that it was too little. He remarks, "Some fine judges have recognized in all this only the artifice of a consummate master of the House of Commons, lowering the tone of an excited assembly by habitual details, and almost proving by his accustomed manner of addressing

them that, after all, he could have done nothing very extraordinary. When a Senate, after a long interval and the occurrence of startling transactions, assembles, if not to impeach, at least to denounce, a Minister, and then are gravely annointed with domestic lard, and invited to a speculation on the price of salt pork, an air of littleness is irresistibly infused into the affair, from which it seems hopeless to extricate the occasion." All this is ingenious, and contains within it a flavor of aristocratic contempt for details and vulgar things like lard and soap and leather, but the fact remains that the speech made a profound impression upon Parliament and the country, an impression which has never been removed, but which remains to this day.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE NEW POLICY.

Peel's Remedy for Famine—Lord Morpeth Returns to Parliament—The Protectionists Demand Time—Lord John Russell Supports the Government—His Explanation—Let us Sell, but not Buy—Stafford O'Brien—The Farm Laborers of Wiltshire—Peel's Speech—Lord Beaconsfield's Review of it—Cobden's Speech—Lord George Bentinck Closes the Debate—Majority for the Government.

THE plan of Sir Robert Peel was a surprise to all parties. Although much was expected, the country was astonished at the bold and comprehensive sweep of the new policy. The Free Traders were literally dumb, for although the measure fell short of their extremely radical demands, it came so much nearer to them than they had expected that they felt it would be ungracious to criticise the Minister, who had a rebellious party on his hands, and the fortunes of a great empire in his keeping. They felt that Peel was bringing all the resources of patriotic statesmanship to the solution of a revenue and economic problem that was agitating the country, and unsettling the theories of ages, that he was actuated by a sincere desire to establish the prosperity of his country on a permanent and sure foundation, and at the same time avert an impend-

ing scarcity which might culminate in famine. They therefore said nothing, leaving the task of censure to his own party. The Tories immediately began to whimper and scold; they dwelt upon the perversion of the government to the Free Trade heresy, but they did not attempt to refute the arguments of the Prime Minister, nor to contradict his testimony. Their oratory might have all been condensed into the painful exclamation of the Earl of March, son and heir of the Duke of Richmond, a baby statesman with no brains, who cried out, that, "really he never in all his life was so horrified, so distressed, or so astonished, as when he heard the Prime Minister's plans that night." The speeches were all in support of a motion for continuance. Time to consider such important changes was necessary; and finally two weeks was granted. There were some who demanded that the sense of the country should be taken first; that Parliament should be dissolved, and a new election had. Some were in favor of referring the whole matter to a "commission," and thus obtain a reprieve; but it was of no use, and on Monday, the 9th of February, the great debate began, the most important that had taken place since 1688. The feature of the night was the introduction of Lord Morpeth, who had just been elected from the West Riding of Yorkshire, where he was defeated in 1841. He brought with him no less than 103 petitions from Yorkshire asking for Free Trade. One petition from Leeds



was signed by 19,000 men, and one from Bradford by 14,000. Some amusement was created by Mr. Ferrand, who challenged the signatures as not being the free and unbiassed acts of the men who signed. He was prepared to prove, he said, that the workingmen in many factories in Yorkshire were obliged to come into the counting houses of the owners and sign. Lord Morpeth silenced him by saying that in his belief the signatures were all the true and independent acts of the parties; and then, amid considerable excitement, the question having been put that the Speaker leave the chair that the House might resolve itself into a committee on the Corn and Importation acts, Mr. P. Miles, on the part of the Protectionists, moved as an amendment that the House should resolve itself into committee that day six months; and on that amendment the great debate began.

Mr. Miles was not regarded as a very able man, and his remarks merely served to open the discussion; nothing more. He repeated the usual Protection generalities, but brought no evidence nor attempted any proof. He declared that there should be a dissolution of Parliament before such momentous changes, and he believed that in the mind of the Prime Minister the cause of Protection had long been doomed, and that potatoes were the last pretext for sealing its fate. He repeated Peel's old argument about the danger which would arise if the country became depend-

ent upon foreigners for corn. The country might now consider Free Trade to be the ruling principle of Her Majesty's government. Mr. Miles was truthfully prophetic when he said, "Sooner or later, every interest must bow to the operation of the Free Trade principle." He felt convinced that the shipping interest would, before long, be deprived of Protection." "Of what use," enquired Mr. Miles, "are navigation laws, or reciprocity treaties, if Protection is to be taken from our own productions?" He expressed his fears that the League would not dissolve as it had promised to do if the Corn-Laws were repealed. He feared that it would preserve its organization, and agitate for revolutionary changes in another direction. Sir W. Heathcote seconded the amendment in a speech wherein he declared that, "Domestic industry requires Protection in proportion to the amount of manual labor necessary to carry it on;" and by force of this principle he tried to make it appear that agriculture being more "manual" than manufacture should have more Protection. In other words, that occupation having the advantage of machinery needed no Protection, while those that used no machinery did. This curious doctrine did not strike the House of Commons as very profound, and Sir W. Heathcote sat down without having created any great sensation.

As the converts at a camp-meeting, in relating their "experience," all say the same thing, so a half a dozen Tories followed Sir W. Heathcote,

and echoed him in monotonous repetition. Then Lord Sandon startled the House by making a good sensible argument against the measure, and at the same time declaring that he should vote for it. He foreboded great disaster from it, especially to farmers and farm laborers. His motive, he said, for voting for the measure was the conviction that it was impossible to maintain Protection against public opinion. "We may grumble and struggle," he said, "but the question is decided against us." This position of Lord Sandon is a curious example of the difficulty some Tories had to separate themselves from Peel. They had so long looked up to his cool head for guidance that the habit of doing so had become a superstition. They could not conceive it possible that they themselves might be right and Peel wrong. They had leaned upon him so long that without him they felt helpless. Even the Duke of Wellington talked in the House of Lords very much as Lord Sandon did in the House of Commons, showing that in spite of what they called his "desertion" of them, a large number of the Tory party had ceased to have any individuality of their own, but had permitted themselves to become absorbed in the personality of Peel.

The chief incident of the first night's debate was the speech of Lord John Russell. His position was peculiar, for he had been turned out of power by Peel in 1841, for proposing a small modification of the Corn-Laws, and he was now mar-

shaling the Whig party to support a proposition of his rival and antagonist for their total repeal. Lord Beaconsfield, in his anxiety to point suspicion at Peel, asserts that Lord John Russell spoke in the tone of a man who had been wronged by Peel, and unfairly driven from office; that his manner was complaining, and justly so. The speech does not bear this interpretation. It is remarkably lofty and patriotic. True, Lord John Russell did criticise some of the details of the new plan, especially the three years reprieve, and he also complained that when he had endeavored to introduce similar reforms he had been met by a party opposition, and finally driven from power, but it was all said in such a manly way as to elicit cheers from both sides of the House, and even from Sir Robert Peel himself. Lord John Russell said, "Considering the plan of the Minister as a great measure, a measure that is to lay the foundation of a completely new principle with regard to our commercial legislation, that principle being neither to foster one trade nor the other, but to leave them to 'flourish or to fade,' according to the energies and skill of the people, and believing that is the sound principle, I am prepared to give every support I can to the plan brought forward by the right honorable gentleman." Lord John Russell placed patriotism above party, and the relief of the people before official jealousy and personal recriminations. Referring in a dignified manner to Mr-



Lascelles, who had just remarked that he supported the plans of the Prime Minister because he thought him more likely to succeed in passing them than Lord John Russell could, he said, "It is by the aid of the Whigs, and by the conduct that we shall pursue that the measure will attain its success." Then waiving all personal ambition, and ignoring private griefs, he generously said, "If the right honorable gentleman has the glory of adopting plans of commercial freedom which will benefit his country, which will enable the poor man to get a better reward for his labor, which will increase the demand for all the productions, and which, after these questions are settled, will, I hope, open the way to the moral improvement of the people of this country, hitherto prevented by their want of adequate means of comfort—if the right honorable gentleman has the glory of carrying a measure fraught with such large and beneficial results, let ours be the solid satisfaction that, out of office, we have associated together for the purpose of aiding and assisting the triumph of the Minister of the Crown."

It was important that the position of the Whigs should be declared thus early in the debate, and the speech of Lord John Russell was a great disappointment to the Protectionist faction who were seeking to obstruct and defeat the reformation. They had hoped that the Whigs would have found some partisan excuse for opposing the measure in revenge for 1841, and naturally enough they

could see no merit in the speech. Their vexation lasted long. A dozen years afterwards Lord Beaconsfield describing it said, "Lord John Russell, who followed in a speech which was not one of his happy efforts, agreed with Lord Sandon, 'that the Minister had not laid his grounds broadly and extensively enough in point of time.' Lord John was not very felicitous in point of time himself. Embarrassed by his engagement to support the measure of his rival, little anticipating the importance and duration of the debate then taking place, and anxious to free himself as soon as possible from the fulfilment of an awkward duty, he wasted his ammunition much too soon in the engagement, spoke inopportunately and ineffectively, and the future first Minister of the country was not heard of in the House of Commons for three weeks." The weakness of this criticism and the motive of it are both apparent.

The debate on the second night is valuable reading, as it exposes the economic error so firmly believed in by the American Protectionists to-day, and so tenaciously held by the English Protectionists thirty-eight years ago; that we should sell to other nations, but not buy of them, and that wise legislation should facilitate the exportation of our products, and forbid the importation of those of other countries. The debate was opened by Mr. Stafford O'Brien, an English Tory land owner, and member for the county of Northampton. He ridiculed what he called "the maxims of political

economy," and declared that they could not be applied to practical purposes. He dug up the ancient "pauper labor" scare-crow, and exhibited it again. He became pathetic over the sorrows of the workingman, after the maudlin fashion peculiar to the rich monopolists of that day—and this. He said, "Suppose that acting upon the axiom of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest, he, a wealthy man in England, furnished his house with paper hangings from Paris; suppose that he traveled in a continental carriage—that he purchased all his earthenware in Germany; suppose all this, when he looked out of the window of his gaudy house, or his foreign-built carriage, what would he see? A vast multitude of unemployed, starving Englishmen. And what would they say to him? 'We are poor English paper-stainers; we are Birmingham hardwaremen; our trade has been taken away from us, what are we to do?'" This kind of talk still had some weight outside, among ignorant workingmen, whose prejudices against "foreign pauper labor" could be easily aroused, but it was laughed at in the House of Commons, as an old imposter of a ghost made out of a hollow pumpkin; it was tiresome twaddle there. Mr. O'Brien requested his countrymen to starve with patience so that he might obtain high rents for his land, and on those terms he was willing to promise that he would not buy his fine carriages in France, nor his crockery in Germany.

Sir James Graham followed Mr. O'Brien, and applied this principle to his argument, that no country can permanently maintain exportation without imports in some shape or other to balance it, nor can a nation maintain importations for any length of time, without exporting something to pay for them. He said, "The honorable member for Northamptonshire described a state of things where a certain person has the walls of his house covered with French paper-hangings, furnished with articles of German hardware, and who rides in a Brussels carriage, while workmen are crowding the market with nobody to hire them. How does he think those carriages are to be obtained? Whatever may be the form of the transaction by which they are obtained, that transaction of necessity resolves itself into a bargain. Directly or indirectly there must be an exchange of commodities, and you must in the long run export some of your own productions to pay for what you have got from abroad." Sir James Graham in replying to the challenge of Lord Worsley that if the members of the government had changed their opinions they should manfully own it, said, "I accept that challenge. I do frankly avow my change of opinion, and, by that avowal, I dispose of all the speeches." Next to Peel himself, Sir James Graham was perhaps the ablest debater in the Ministry, and his speech on this occasion was regarded as a successful defense of the government. Speaking as a landlord,



he said, "For one, sooner than it should be said of myself, or any of the class to which I belong, that our object was to secure for ourselves an increase of rent, and not to promote the welfare and happiness of the great body of the community—sooner than leave any room for such a suspicion, I should say, speaking for myself, that I would descend to a lower estate, and abrogate my inheritance."

While this debate was going on in the House of Commons, another was going on outside. It was conducted at night by the "protected" farm laborers of Wiltshire. Its revelations were of a startling character, and the Protectionists both in Parliament and out of it were greatly disturbed by them. The Tories were thrown upon the defensive; and apologies and explanations came thick and fast. It may be doubted whether the skillful oratory and logical argument of Peel, and Graham, and Bright had so much effect as the rude pathos of those rustic hinds, who had been "protected" to starvation by a false and selfish economic system, the relic of a barbarous age. Their simple statements constituted eloquence of a very exciting kind. They could not be answered by argument; they could only be denied, and denial was useless, for the facts were too plain. Some of the speakers were women, and the stories they told of suffering made the Protectionists seem the mere apologists of poverty and injustice. One man said, "My friends—I be a laboring man; I

have a wife and seven children in family, my wages at the present time is eight shillings a week." Another said, "For the last fortnight I have received only six shillings a week. I know many men with four children who have only six shillings a week. I expect to be discharged when I get home for coming to the meeting. It be them Corn-Laws—them cursed Corn-Laws, that make bread dear. I have been employed like a horse in drawing a cart. I was one of five men yoked to the cart." Many others talked in the same way, but the speeches of the women were more pathetic and sorrowful than those of the men. One woman said that she was compelled to feed her children upon nettles and weeds, and this, they said, is "Protection." This exposure of the condition of the "protected" English peasantry was a powerful weapon in the hands of the Free Traders, and the Protectionists were not able to soften down the indignation which it caused among the people.

On the fifth night of the debate, Sir Robert Peel addressed the house. He spoke for three hours, and gave a full explanation of the break-up of his government in December, and his resumption of office. He defended himself from the imputation of unfairness to Lord John Russell, and read a letter which he had sent to the Queen on the 8th of December, two days after his resignation, and when he expected that Lord John Russell would succeed in forming an administra-

tion, in which he had promised Her Majesty that he would support Lord John Russell in any measures he might bring forward for a repeal of the Corn-Laws, not inconsistent with the spirit of his lordship's letter from Edinburgh to the electors of the city of London. He then gave his reasons for introducing the measures now before the House, and defended them both on principle and on the ground of expediency. Even Lord Beaconsfield admits the strength of this important speech. He says, "The speech of Sir Robert Peel was one of his best; indignant and vigorous, free from the affectation of fairness, and that too obvious plausibility in which of late years he had somewhat luxuriantly indulged; he threw off the apologetic tone, and was uncompromising both in his principles and demeanor. The peroration was in the high League style, though, of course, adapted to the more refined taste of the House of Commons." This is a great concession on the part of Lord Beaconsfield, but the speech deserved it.

Some of Peel's facts and arguments coming from the great height of an experienced Prime Minister and statesman fell with crushing weight upon the Protectionist resistance, and absolutely broke it down. For instance, he made this challenge, "Show me," he said, "one relaxation, one removal of prohibition, which has not contributed to the advantage of the great body of consumers. I will go farther. I will show you that these removals of prohibition have contributed not merely to the general

weal and advantage of the consumers, but that they are perfectly consistent with the permanent benefit and increased wealth of the producer." He then enforced his challenge by some startling statistics, showing the increased importation of timber under the reduced tariff, which increased supply had stimulated ship-building and every trade of which wood was the raw material. A reduction of the tariff on silk and its materials had been followed by the increased prosperity of the silk trade. For centuries the English silk manufacturer had been protected by a high tariff against the "pauper labor" of France. With an air of triumphant superiority that almost shriveled up the Protectionists, he exclaimed, "Look at the state of your silk trade at this moment. The French have long been accustomed to plume themselves upon their silk manufactures. But it may, perhaps, surprise not a few of those who are now listening to me, to learn that last year, with our relaxed tariff, we actually exported to France more silk than we exported to the whole universe in any year of the Protective System. And there is no branch of manufactures in which the same improvement is not observable." Then in the self-confidence of a man who knows what he is talking about, he turned upon the angry crowd behind him, and said, "I am prepared to prove this," but there was not one of them bold enough to call for the evidence. Referring to the dread of foreign competition, he pointed to the immense



resources of England, her coal, and iron, her freedom, the skill of her artisans, the physical and mental strength of her people; and then with the haughty pride of an Englishman looking down upon surrounding nations, and scorning to believe that they were able to compete with his own countrymen in manufactures or in anything else, he enquired, "What have you to fear?" Some day a triumphant statesman standing in the Capitol at Washington, and pointing to the resources of our country, a hundred-fold greater than England ever had, and to the activity, intelligence, and the industrial skill of our people, will silence our own Protectionists by repeating the question of Peel, "What have you to fear?"

The debate went on for three weeks, and was greatly enlivened on the last night of it by a speech from Mr. Cobden. He was good natured, and, indeed, rather patronizing to the Tories, and he assured them that their fears of Free Trade were foolish. He told them that they themselves had lost confidence in the soundness of the "Protection" principle, and that their actions proved it. "You wish for an appeal to the country," he said, "and you will abide by its decision. If you could depend upon your principles, you would not take such a course. You would say that you would not yield to one defeat or many, but you have no confidence in your doctrine." Referring to the threat that the bill should be defeated in the House of Lords, he said with great signifi-

cance, "Recollect there is no cotton spinner nor manufacturer there." Like a kind father talking to a lot of children, Mr. Cobden lectured the Protectionists; and so amiably was it all done, that they bore it with good humor, if not with pleasure. Once, when he told them that in case of a new election they would lose every town containing as many as 25,000 inhabitants, they interrupted him with loud cries of "No," "No," but he replied quickly, "I tell you that you have neither Liverpool nor Bristol." He made much ridicule of the old arguments about "dependence on the foreigner," "land going out of cultivation," the "drain of gold," etc., which, he said, although knocked in the head long ago, had come out again in this debate as fresh as ever. "You would know better," said Mr. Cobden, "if you lived in the world, and not in a charmed circle." "Recollect," he continued, "I want no triumph; but I want us all to confer together to see if we cannot carry out something better for our country, and when this great measure is passed we will dissolve the League—but not till then." The hopeful, modest, and sunshiny tone of Cobden's speech lifted the debate into a more friendly atmosphere, and then Lord George Bentinck closed it. He had lately been chosen leader of the Protectionist party, and for three hours he made a gallant struggle against a hostile tide; and when he concluded there were loud calls of "Divide," "Divide."

The debate had lasted for three weeks, and more than a hundred speeches had been made. It was thought that it would end on Friday night, the 27th of February. Great crowds of people waited in Parliament street all night long, anxious to hear the result. It was 3 o'clock in the morning of Saturday, February 28, 1846, when the debate ended, and when the division was had there appeared to be—for the government proposals, 337; against them, 240. The revolution was accomplished. The cheers of the Free Traders inside and outside the House waked up London. The Protectionist Parliament of 1841 had, in the beginning of 1846, established Free Trade as the commercial policy of England by a majority of ninety-seven votes. The great struggle was ended, and the industry of Britain was free. In the year 1436 the first law was passed restricting the importation of foreign grain. It had been altered for better and for worse many times since then, and now at the venerable age of four hundred and ten years, it was slain on the spot where it was born. As the League had proclaimed from the very beginning, it carried down with it the whole System of Protection. The schedule of import duties yet remaining was based on the principle of a tariff for revenue only.

A fine illustration of the bigotry of good, old-fashioned, protection Toryism was furnished during the progress of this debate by the Duke of Newcastle. He owned a great part of the



county of Nottingham, and in that county his will was law. He directed who should be elected to Parliament, and who should be defeated. Now, it so happened that his eldest son, the Earl of Lincoln, was member for South Nottinghamshire, and he was also a member of Sir Robert Peel's administration. He had changed his opinions on the subject of Protection, and had become a supporter of the Free Trade measures of the government. He had resigned one post in the administration to accept another, that of Chief Secretary for Ireland. The acceptance of this new office vacated his seat in Parliament, and required him to go before his constituents for a re-election, and before them he accordingly went. The Duke of Newcastle, however, had become so angry and indignant because Lord Lincoln supported Peel, that he gave orders that his son should be defeated, and defeated he was. Mr. Nildyard, a Protectionist, was elected in his place, by a majority of seven hundred votes.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### A TARIFF FOR REVENUE ONLY.

Passage of the Bill Through Committee—Obstructive Tactics of the Protectionists—The House of Lords—Lord Stanley's Speech Against the Bill—The Bill Passes the House of Lords—Peel's Government Overthrown—His Remarks on Quitting Office—Lord John Russell Becomes Prime Minister—Continues the Free Trade Policy—Repeals the Navigation Laws—The Wisdom of the New Policy Proven by Forty Years Experience—Growth of Britain Under the New System.

THE vote of February 27th was merely for going into committee; the measures approved by it were not yet law. Every item in the new tariff could be debated and amended in committee of the whole; this offered to the Protectionists a chance to delay the bill, and they immediately resolved on a policy of obstruction. They hoped, in a bewildered sort of way, that if they could only get time something might "turn up" to help them; they did not know exactly what, but like the doomed criminal they looked upon even a respite as including within it the prospect of ultimate escape. Lord Beaconsfield confesses this with a simple fatuity not excelled by Mr. Micawber himself. In his "Biography of Lord George Bentinck," he says, "The great object which Lord George now proposed to him-

self was, to delay the progress of the government measures, so that they should not reach the House of Lords before Easter. He believed that time might still ensure their discomfiture. The majority of the 27th of February was only in favor of going into committee. Before, therefore, any bill for the repeal of the Corn-Laws could be brought forward the principle of every projected alteration of the tariff must individually be sanctioned by a particular vote. The opportunities for resistance, therefore, were considerable and encouraging." This policy of delay was adopted, and, in fact, it was not until May that the bill passed its third reading, and went up to the House of Lords. But all this was mere formality, after the vote of February 27th,—the mere ceremonial of nailing on the coffin lid, and preparing the deceased for burial. The funeral might be delayed, but it could not be prevented.

When the bill went up to the House of Lords, the Tory peers made a fussy pretense of throwing it out, but they were at last afraid to do so. They had only one man among them of really great ability. That was Lord Stanley, who had lately resigned his place in the Cabinet, rather than consent to the repeal of the Corn-Laws. The hopes of monopoly centered on him, and every Protectionist in England was yelping behind him, "On, Stanley, on." He made a great speech, which for a moment infused a little courage into his party. He opposed Free Trade with the same vehemence

that his father and his grandfather had opposed railroads, and for the same antiquated reasons. The old man used to employ a lot of people whose duty it was to shoot any railroad surveyor who came upon his lands. Lord Stanley paraded over and over again the ancient heresies of the Protective System, as if the steam engine and the printing press had not yet come. Shut out from the light of the nineteenth century, in the gloomy grandeur of the House of Lords, his speech might have been the speech of his ancestor fresh from the fight of Bosworth field.

On the same day that the bill passed its third reading in the House of Commons, the Duke of Buccleugh, on the part of the government, moved its first reading in the House of Lords, which was instantly opposed by the Duke of Richmond who entered his protest against the measure as "an unauthorized abandonment of the great principle of Protection to British industry." Lord Montague replied to the Duke of Richmond, and said that "the doctrines of Free Trade recognized a clear distinction between protective duties, and a tariff for revenue only." Earl Grey made the ablest speech on the Free Trade side. He had lately been transferred to the House of Lords by the death of his father. As Lord Howick, he had in the House of Commons proved himself, next to Mr. Villiers, the most philosophical and consistent Free Trader among all the members of the aristocracy who took that side; and in his new

position he was pronounced and clear as he was in the Lower House of Parliament; he said, that "he could only accept the scheme of the government as an instalment, not a perfect measure of Free Trade. He was still, as he had ever been, against all duties for Protection; and he could answer for the great body of the manufacturers that they desired not a particle of Protection for themselves when they asked for the removal of all Protective and differential duties on every article of consumption." He was followed by Lord Ashburton, one of the few peers who belonged to the commercial classes, and he insisted on preserving the plan of "reciprocity." "The Germans," he said, "had their Zollverein, and France her restrictive system, and England required a similar system to counteract them." Replying to Earl Grey, he said, that he did not believe that the manufacturers would redeem the promise that had been made in their name. Lord Ashburton showed a very good knowledge of human nature when he said that "he believed the magnanimity of the manufacturers to be of the kind that would like Free Trade for every commodity except that which they themselves supplied."

Lord Stanley reserved his great speech for the debate on the second reading of the bill. It was strong in oratory, but weak in argument, and its ignorant denial of the famine impending over Ireland must forever keep Lord Stanley from



taking rank among the great statesmen of England. He spoke of the coming famine as "an utterly baseless vision haunting the imagination of the government," and he declared that "no country of eminence had ever ventured upon the rash experiment of leaving corn unprotected by restrictive duties on foreign importation." He said that reducing the price of wheat in order to relieve a scarcity in potatoes would produce no more effect than a law to reduce the price of pine-apples. He also denounced the League and said that the government had mistaken the brawling torrent of agitation for the current of public opinion. The Anti-Corn-Law League had obtained a victory over the ministers of the Crown, and the ministers of the Crown had obtained a victory over their own political supporters, and he might also say over the independence of Parliament itself. Explaining his conduct in the Cabinet, he admitted that he had agreed in November to a temporary suspension of the duties on the importation of foreign corn, provided it were merely temporary. This declaration was inconsistent with the opinion just expressed that cheap wheat could no more supply the failure of potatoes than cheap pine-apples could. It was unstatesman-like in this, that he was willing to admit foreign grain to stay the hunger of the people, but only for a time, and on the express condition that as soon as their hunger was relieved the protective tariff should be re-imposed, in order to make them hungry again.

Lord Stanley then claimed that the large exports of British manufactures as shown by the returns was due to the Protective System, and proved its value; but this was merely the old sophistry that two conditions being proven to exist, one must be the cause of the other. Large exports of manufactured goods being possible under the Protective System, Lord Stanley pretended that they would be impossible without it. This assumption is adopted by the American Protectionists now. They claim all the prosperity of the country as due to the Protective System, totally ignoring the ten thousand means of wealth that compel prosperity in spite of the tax laid upon our internal resources by the Protective policy. The fallacy of Lord Stanley's argument was apparent in the fact that every reduction of tariff duties had been followed by a larger export trade, and it ignored the probability that exports would be still more greatly multiplied should Protection be abandoned altogether. That this probability was well founded was subsequently demonstrated by the test of actual experiment. Lord Stanley was afterwards twice Prime Minister of England, but this speech proves that he was deficient in that broad wisdom and penetrating foresight so essential to the character of a statesman.

At last he appealed to the selfish landlord feeling, and warned the House of Lords that should the Corn-Laws be repealed, their wealth and influence, and standing in the country would

be gone. He said, 'Whatever may be the difficulties of reconciling the action of our mixed constitution—of keeping the balance even between a proud aristocracy and a reformed House of Commons—depend upon it those difficulties will not be less if, instead of a proud aristocracy you substitute a pauper aristocracy.' In all this there was a patrician insolence absolutely sublime. Here was an "order" of professed idlers, who by conquest, confiscation, and all manner of injustice, had possessed themselves of the land, claiming special privileges as the reward of usurpation, insisting that they formed a superior caste whose prerogative it was to live in luxury on the toil of others, and whose vested right it was to make the food of the people dear in order to increase the wrongful rent of lands to which they had no title whatever but the edge of a sword. It never occurred to Lord Stanley and the rest of the "noble lords" that should their unjust privileges be taken away from them, they need not become paupers, because the same opportunities of earning a living were open to them that other people had. On the contrary the mere suggestion of such a thing they resented as a wrong, and Lord Stanley had the daring to say that "If you reduce the landed aristocracy in the scale of society you will inflict an irretrievable and irreparable injury upon the country."

It must ever be a blot not only upon the statesmanship of Lord Stanley, but also on his



patriotism that he advocated the unjust system of protection from sordid and selfish motives. No glamour of Norman chivalry can hide the greedy character of his opposition to commercial reform and the repeal of the Corn-Laws. The evidence against him is irresistible. His father owned 47,000 acres of land in Lancashire, and 9,000 in Chester, 740 acres in Limerick, and 6,500 in Tipperary, with some smaller tracts in other counties, and he thought that high rents were put in jeopardy by the proposal to repeal the Corn-Laws. The result of the repeal curiously proves how unfounded were all his forebodings. Those natural partners, Free Trade and railroads, which the Stanleys had so bitterly opposed, instead of bringing them to poverty had a contrary effect upon their fortunes. Let us see how near they came to making a "pauper aristocracy" of them. Free Trade and railroads gave such a stimulus to the growth of Liverpool and Manchester that the value of their lands in Lancashire and Cheshire was multiplied fourfold. Lord Stanley inherited those vast possessions and transmitted them to his son, the present Earl of Derby. His income from those lands according to the new Domesday book is, for the lands in Cheshire \$32,000, and for the lands in Lancashire \$780,000 a year. And yet if Lord Stanley and his father could have had their way, England would have had neither railroads nor Free Trade, and Liverpool would not have one-fourth its present wealth, prosperity, and population.



Lord Brougham replied to Lord Stanley in a vigorous speech in which he paid a fine tribute to the patriotic self-sacrifice of Sir Robert Peel, who, he said, "had given up what to an ambitious man was much—the main security of his power—he had surrendered what to a calculating man was much—his influence and authority with his party—and he had given up what to an amiable man was much, viz., private friendship and party conversation. All these sacrifices he had made voluntarily and with his eyes open, in order to discharge what he deemed a great public duty." After this a couple of nights were spent in rather feeble debate, and on a division the second reading was carried by 211 to 164.

The last squeak for Protection came from the Duke of Richmond, who presented a petition from some ribbon-makers praying that their contemptible monopoly might be spared from the general wreck. Once more Richmond and Buckingham called upon their lordships not to be afraid of the League, but the fact was that they were afraid of it. They feared that if they threw out the bill, and thereby compelled a dissolution of Parliament, the excitement of the people would add such power to the League, that in its rage it might sweep away not only the Corn-Laws, but the House of Lords itself. They therefore allowed the bill to pass, and they were so disheartened that on the 25th of June the bill went through on its third reading without even a division.

That same night the government of Sir Robert Peel was overthrown. On the Irish Coercion Bill, the irreconcilable Tory faction in the House of Commons, led on by Lord George Bentinck and Mr. Disraeli, took revenge upon the Minister for his Free Trade policy by voting with the opposition, and on a division the administration was defeated by 292 to 219. Sir Robert Peel immediately resigned. On Monday night he announced his resignation in a speech of much good temper, pathos, and dignity. In the very hour of his fall his political sky was at its brightest. On that very day came an official dispatch from America announcing that the United States government had settled the Oregon question on the terms proposed by him, and thus had dissipated the war cloud which for some time had darkened the relations between the two countries. He said that he would offer no factious opposition to the government of those who had thrown him out of office. He promised to support Lord John Russell's administration in carrying out the new commercial policy. He said, "If that be the policy which will be pursued, I shall feel it my duty to give to his government my cordial support. I presume that Her Majesty's government will adopt that policy—and that if other countries choose to buy in the dearest market, it will be no discouragement to them to permit us to buy in the cheapest." He then advised Lord John Russell to abandon the "treaty" and "reciprocity".

system in his foreign commercial policy. "I trust," he said, "that the new government will not resume the policy which they and we have found so inconvenient, namely, haggling with foreign countries, instead of taking that independent course which we believe to be conducive to our own interests.

Of course much of his speech was a review of his Free Trade policy, and to the leader of the Free Trade movement he paid this magnanimous tribute. He said, "The name which ought to be associated with the success of the Free Trade measures, is not the name of the noble Lord the member for London, nor is it my name. It is the name of a man, who, acting as I believe from disinterested motives, has, with untiring energy, by appeals to reason, enforced their necessity with an eloquence the more to be admired because it was unaffected and unadorned;—the name which ought to be associated with these measures is the name of Richard Cobden." This lifted the Free Traders right out of their seats, and the cheering was loud and long. Many Tories joined in it, for everybody liked Cobden. At last in the midst of deep silence, he said :

"Sir, I shall leave office, I fear, with a name severely censured by many honorable gentlemen, who, on public principle, deeply regret the severance of party ties; I shall surrender power severely censured, I fear again, by many honorable gentlemen, who, from no interested motive,



have adhered to the principle of Protection as important to the welfare and interests of the country; I shall leave a name execrated by every monopolist, who, from less honorable motives, maintains Protection for his own individual benefit; but it may be that I shall leave a name sometimes remembered with expressions of good will in those places which are the abode of men whose lot it is to labor, and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow—a name remembered with expressions of good will, when they shall recreate their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because it is no longer leavened by a sense of injustice.”

As he took his seat nearly the whole House rose, and cheered him for several minutes; only the sulky Protectionist faction sat silent. Since the time of Wolsey no Prime Minister of England had fallen with greater dignity. When the cheering had subsided he again rose, and moved that the House adjourn until Friday, to give Lord John Russell time to form the new administration. Then taking the arm of a friend he left the House. In order to avoid the vast crowds in the streets he left by the side door that led into Westminster Hall, and tried to escape by that way, but the crowd heard of it, and headed him off. Hundreds of men formed a circle around him, and with rude but respectful courtesy, they escorted him to his home. Never in the history of England was the fall of a minister so like a triumph.



That Sir Robert Peel regarded the downfall of his ministry as affording him a grateful relief from the cares of office, is shown by the following letter to his friend, Lord Hardinge, Governor-General of India, written immediately after his resignation:

DRAYTON MANOR, July 4, 1846.

*My Dear Hardinge:*

You will see that we are out—defeated by a combination of Whigs and Protectionists. A much less emphatic hint would have sufficed for me. I would not have held office by sufferance for a week.

Were I to write a quire of paper I could not recount to you what has passed with half so much accuracy and detail as the public papers will recount it. There are no secrets. We have fallen in the face of day, and with our front to our enemies.

There is nothing I would not have done to ensure the carrying of the measures I had proposed this session; but the moment their success was ensured, and I had the satisfaction of seeing two drowsy old Masters in Chancery mumbled out at the table of the House of Commons, that the Lords had passed the Corn and Customs bills I was satisfied.

Two hours after this, intelligence was brought that we were ejected from power; and by another coincidence as marvellous, on the day on which I had to announce in the House of Commons the dissolution of the government, the news arrived that we had settled the Oregon question, and that our proposals had been accepted by the United States without the alteration of a word.

Lady Peel and I are quite alone here—in the loveliest weather—feasting on solitude and repose, and I have every disposition to forgive my enemies for having conferred upon me the blessing of the loss of power.

Most truly and affectionately yours,

ROBERT PEEL.

This history ends here. Although the application of the new commercial system to all the conditions of the empire; to its agricultural, manufacturing, mining, colonial, shipping, and other interests, was the work of a series of years and many acts of legislation, yet the struggle to establish the Free Trade principle as the policy of England ended with the triumph of Sir Robert Peel's measures in 1846. The repeal of protection to shipping, known as the "Navigation Laws," did not take effect until 1850, and it was not until some years later, that all traces of the Protective System were eliminated from the revenue policy of England, and the tariff on imports made for purposes of revenue only. The protective duty on sugar lingered along for some time on the plea of discouraging slavery, and encouraging the free labor of the British West Indies. The duty on timber survived for awhile on the theory that in return for the allegiance and trade of the colony of Canada, the Canadian forests ought to be protected against the "pauper forests" of the United States, while the Navigation Laws resisted reform because Adam Smith had said that they were an exception to the Free Trade theory, for they developed a mercantile marine from which native sailors could always be obtained to man the royal navy in time of war. The Protectionists, of course, offered a mechanical resistance to the removal of these restrictions, and they declared that the repeal of the Navigation Laws was the death knell of

England, the transferring of her ship-building industry to the United States, the disappearance of her flag from the ocean, the decay of her fighting power, and the end of her naval superiority. These arguments were strong, and the Protectionist forebodings had much weight; so much weight, indeed, that Lord John Russell's bill for the repeal of the Navigation Laws passed its second reading in the House of Commons by a meagre majority of only fifty-six. Still, it was felt that the Free Trade experiment having been entered upon, and the principle of it solemnly sanctioned, all protection exceptions to it were illogical and inconsistent; and under the pressure of this reasoning, all commercial restrictions of every kind were finally swept away.

As soon as England was freed from the incumbrances of what is improperly called "Protection," she bounded forward to a prosperity greater than she had ever known before. The object of this history has been to avoid statistics as much as possible, for they are dry reading; but a few argumentative statistics may not be out of place. In 1840 the foreign commerce of the United Kingdom, exports and imports, not including bullion and specie, amounted to 665 millions of dollars; in 1880 it was 3,485 millions. Within those figures may be included all other statistics of every kind. A few more details, however, will not tire the reader, and will be found valuable. In 1840 the imports into Britain amounted in

value to 310 millions of dollars, in 1880 they amounted to 2,055 millions. In 1840 the exports from Britain, of British produce, amounted to 255 millions of dollars, in 1880 they amounted to 1,115 millions. Fractions are excluded here, and a pound is called five dollars. The foreign and colonial produce exported from Britain in 1840 amounted to 50 millions of dollars, in 1880 it amounted to 315 millions.

The above figures show a wonderful increase in the wealth and material prosperity of the country, a growth out of all proportion to the increase in the population, but they do not show how that increased prosperity was distributed among the people. Nor is it necessary that they should, for the laws that govern, or ought to govern, the distribution of wealth among those who have produced it, belong to another branch of political science, and need not be discussed here. We are not without assistance, however, in determining this question. The statistics of average annual consumption of the principal imported and excisable articles per head, for the total population of the United Kingdom, from 1840 to 1880, show the most surprising and beneficent results of the Free Trade policy. It may be stated in one sentence that in 1840 the working people of England, Ireland, and Scotland were always hungry. This, of course, is not literally true, but it is true enough. In 1840 the hunger had not entirely ceased, but it was the exception, not the rule. In 1840 there



was imported into Britain of corn, wheat, and wheat flour, 42 lbs. per head, for all the population; in 1880 the quantity was 210 lbs. per head. In 1840 the quantity of butter imported was 1 lb. per head; in 1880 it was 7 lbs. Of cheese 1 lb. in 1840, 5 lbs. in 1880; of bacon and hams one-tenth of a pound in 1840, 15 lbs. and nine-tenths in 1880; of potatoes one one-hundreth of a pound in 1840, 31½ lbs. in 1880. It may be said that this table is fallacious because it only shows the increase to the people from importations, but does not show the loss they have sustained from decreased home production resulting from the repeal of the Corn-Laws; but the reply to that is that there has not been any decrease, for as large a quantity of those articles is raised in England now as was raised then, so that the people have all the home production for their use and comfort, and this enormous importation also.

It may be objected again that the figures only show the gross quantity of those articles imported, and that if equally divided, it would be that much per head; but that in fact it may be all enjoyed by the rich, and none by the laboring people. This argument might apply to some articles, but not to bread and bacon. The consumption of those articles by rich people always remains about the same, but a great increase in their consumption is absolute proof that the poor and not the rich are better fed. But we have another test, and a fair one. In 1840 there was imported into

the United Kingdom one-quarter of a gallon of wine per head for all the population ; in 1880 it was less than half a gallon per head. Wine is the luxury of the rich, and these figures all show that the increased consumption of bread and meat was by the people at large. Another fair test, which will apply to both the objections above referred to, is furnished by tea and sugar. These are not raised in England, and of course, all that was used then in 1840 was imported, the same as that used in 1880. The returns prove that in 1840 there was imported into the United Kingdom  $1\frac{1}{4}$  lbs. of tea, per head for all the population, while in 1880 the quantity amounted to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. per head. Of raw sugar the quantity imported in 1840 was  $15\frac{1}{4}$  lbs. per head, in 1880 it was  $54\frac{1}{4}$  lbs. Of refined sugar none was imported in 1840, in 1880 the importation was  $9\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. per head.

Between 1840 and 1880 the wages of the working people of England largely increased, but it is not necessary to mention that, because the increased consumption of food shown by the above figures prove that the people must have had more wages to buy those comforts with, or they could not have been imported at all. They prove that the Free Trade policy has given to the people of England more to eat, more to wear, and better houses to live in. It has given them higher wages with less hours of labor. It has given them more holidays, more books, and more enjoyments, and their moral advancement has grown with their

material prosperity. The man who sees the English now, and remembers the England of 1846, can scarcely recognise the people, so great has been the improvement in one generation.

A word or two about shipping, because the United States tenaciously clings to the Navigation Laws borrowed from England, and which the people of that country unanimously believed for centuries were absolutely necessary to establish and maintain her ship-building industry at home, and her mercantile interests abroad, without which she could not have a nursery of sailors to man the royal fleet in time of danger. In the debate of 1849, on the bill for the amendment of the Navigation Laws, English statesmen had got no further along in their political education than to talk like this. Mr. Drummond looked upon the measure as one of a series, "the end and intention of which was to discharge British, in order to give employment to foreign workmen." Mr. Bankes agreed with Mr. Drummond that the whole scheme was part of a policy "for the depression of the British laborer." Mr. Hildyard said that the effect of it would be "to draw capital from England, and make it dependent on foreign countries for its shipping." Mr. Thompson said that "the United States could not, even if so disposed, give anything to us in comparison to the great advantages it was now proposed to surrender to them. America, from her geographical position possessed many advantages over us. She had

Free Trade with China; and the Navigation Laws destroyed, American goods would displace British manufactures in that market. Mr. Robinson said that without Protection "it was impossible for the British shipbuilder to compete with the foreigner. The present tonnage of the United States was now nearly equal to that of England, and the difference would soon dwindle away if the Navigation Laws were repealed." The Marquis of Granby said that "our naval supremacy depends upon the maintenance of the Navigation Laws." On the final passage of the bill Mr. Drummond made another attack upon it, and declared that it came from the "Satanic school of politics." Let us see how nearly the forebodings of those gentlemen came to pass. In 1849, the number of British sailing vessels engaged in the home and foreign trade was 17,807, with a tonnage of 2,988,021 tons. In 1880, the number of sailing vessels was 16,183, with a tonnage of 3,750,442 tons. In 1849, the number of British steamers engaged in the home and foreign trade (not including river steamers), was 414, with a tonnage of 108,321 tons. In 1880, the number of British steamers engaged in the home and foreign trade (not including river steamers), was 3,789, with a tonnage amounting to 2,594,135. In 1849, the number of sailors employed on those vessels (not including masters), was 152,611. In 1880, the number was 192,972. In 1840, when the Navigation Laws for the protection of British shipping were in full force, the



excess of British tonnage over the foreign tonnage entering the ports of the United Kingdom was 3,541,303 tons. In 1880, the excess was 23,961,905 tons. In 1840, the total tonnage of all the vessels entering and clearing at the ports of the United Kingdom was, British, 6,940,485 tons; foreign, 2,949,182 tons. In 1880, it was as follows: British, 41,348,984 tons; foreign, 17,387,079 tons.

On the impartial Protectionist seeking to know the truth, those facts and figures may have some weight; on the selfish Protectionist, interested in the preservation of monopoly, they will make no impression. On him reason, argument, facts and figures are all lost. To him the instructive numbers just given are unsubstantial and unreal, a vagary of Free Trade, a theory and a delusion. To him a barn, or a ship, or a grain elevator is nothing but a cloud, and "very like a whale;" to him the demonstrations of geometry are only the fanatical theories of Euclid. He is outside the courts of reason.

Every Protectionist argument is entitled to respectful treatment, except one—that which consists in a sneer at England for her Free Trade policy, a policy which has been so largely beneficial, not only to the people of Great Britain, but to the people of America. It is difficult to keep down an expression of contempt when we hear men who inhabit the fertile plain between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers speak with derision of a policy which offers them a free and open market

for everything they raise, and for everything they are able to manufacture, a policy which has not only multiplied the comforts of life to all the people of Great Britain, but which has given an added value to every acre of land in Illinois and Iowa.

Signing the Document,  
The Laoköon of Labor,  
Chopping Sand,

AND OTHER ESSAYS.

BY

WHEELBARROW.

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